The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg Study Guide

The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg by Mark Twain

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Introduction

"The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" first appeared in *Harper's Monthly* in December 1899. Harper Brothers publishers reprinted the story in 1900 in the collection *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Sketches*. Twain wrote the story in 1898 while he lectured in Europe, and the manuscript, which is held by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, was written almost entirely on the stationery of Metropole Hotel in Vienna. Twain had hoped that a lecture tour would help him recover recent financial losses, which resulted from investing heavily in the unsuccessful Paige typesetting machine. Along with his financial burdens, Twain was depressed after his daughter Susy died, and he also was concerned about the failing health of both his wife Olivia and his youngest daughter Jean, who suffered from epilepsy. Hence, critics often interpret "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" in relation to Twain's personal discontent, attributing the story's pessimistic tone and its theme of disillusionment with human nature to his own misfortunes during the 1890s.

Many critics discuss the town of Hadleyburg as a "microcosm of America," comparing the activities and personalities of the townsfolk to various features of the American character. Whether Twain based Hadleyburg on an actual place or constructed it as a fictional symbol remains unclear, although various American towns have claimed to be the model for Hadleyburg. Critics often debate whether "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" represents a story of revenge or of redemption. Some critics emphasize the revenge theme, pointing to the hypocritical characterizations and the deterministic tone of the story. Others analyze "Hadleyburg" in terms of a revised "Eden" myth, citing the moralistic theme that demonstrates the possibility of salvation. Commentators often identify the mysterious stranger as a Satan figure. Like the Satan of seventeenthcentury poet John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the stranger leads the town to a "fortunate fall," but critics disagree whether he is an agent of moral destruction or rejuvenation.

Author Biography

The son of John Marshall Clemens, a judge, and Jane Lampton Clemens in Hannibal, Missouri, Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain when he began to write professionally. Before beginning his literary career, Clemens held diverse jobs, ranging from riverboat pilot and occasional gold-miner to journeyman printer and journalist. He spent much of his early adulthood traveling up and down the Mississippi River by steamboat and throughout the western frontier with his brother Orion, who became Nevada's secretary of territory in 1861.

Clemens's earliest works include a series of letters published in regional newspapers that reported the risk and adventure of life on the frontier. Sensing America's appetite for "news," especially the sensational kind, Clemens often peppered his reports with outlandish hoaxes and tall tales, which often caused controversy as readers assumed they were true. A headline Clemens wrote in 1853 for his brother's Hannibal newspaper, *Journal,* evinces his penchant for irony, comedy, and good-natured satire: "Terrible Accident! 500 Men Killed and Missing!" He explains in the subsequent article, "We had set the above head up, expecting (of course) to use it, but as the accident hasn't yet happened, we'll say 'To be continued.'" Clemens first signed his pen name in 1863 to his "Carson City Letters" series that appeared in Virginia City's *Territorial Enterprise*. In 1865, Clemens as Twain published "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," his first short story.

Astounding for both its quantity and quality, Twain's work is best known for its humorous rendering of human imperfection. While his early novels, short stories, essays and public lectures poke fun at human fallibility with delight and good nature, his later writings assume a moralistic tone, including such works such as *What is Man?* (1898), the collected fragments that were to make up *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), and "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899). Critics detect an underlying "deterministic" philosophy in his later works. Determinism asserts that humans refuse to accept their inherently sinful nature, which inevitably leads to a moral fall. Pointing to the edifying benefits of sin, some critics read stories like "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as an expostulation of "the fortunate fall" myth. Scholars often attribute Twain's gloomy outlook at the time to personal troubles. Recently bankrupted by investments in the failed Paige typesetting machine, Twain lost his daughter Susy to meningitis in 1896, while he was in Europe on a lecture tour to satisfy his creditor's demands. Critics also sense optimism in his later moralistic writings. Similar in this respect to his earlier works, he notes in his *Autobiography* that solid morals always inform worthy and lasting humor. Otherwise, humor is merely "decoration" and "fragrance." Twain writes: "Humor must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would last forever."

Plot Summary

Part 1

An omniscient narrator opens the story with a description of Hadleyburg, U.S.A., as "honest," "upright," and very proud of its "unsmirched" reputation. The town enjoys national renown for protecting every citizen against all temptation from infancy through death. Appropriately, the town motto reads "Lead us not into temptation." The tale then segues to the bitter thoughts of an "offended stranger," who has nursed a grudge against the town during the past year for an unnamed, unrequited offense. Rather than murder the one or two individuals responsible, the stranger plots vengeance to "comprehend the entire town, and not let so much as one person escape unhurt."

The "mysterious, big" stranger puts his scheme into action when he delivers a sack of gold coins, supposedly worth $40,000, to the home of Mary and Edward Richards, who is a cashier at the Hadleyburg bank. Alone when the sack arrives, Mary panics then notices a note attached to the sack. The note explains that some time ago a financially and morally bankrupt ex-gambler arrived in Hadleyburg, where a citizen gave him twenty dollars and sage advice. Ironically, the stranger amassed a fortune by gambling with those twenty dollars. He now wants to repay his benefactor whose identity can be determined by repeating the words of advice that he spoke so long ago, which are disclosed in a document within a sealed envelope inside the sack. The stranger's note concludes by asking the Richardses to find the man and to conduct their search either privately or publicly. However, if they choose a public method, all claims must be forwarded to Reverend Burgess, whom the stranger authorizes to open the sealed envelope and verify a match.

Alarmed by the prospect of theft, Mary explains the situation to Edward when he comes home. Edward jokes about burning the letters and keeping the money to themselves, but he promptly goes to the newspaper office to advertise the sack. He favors the public method because neighboring towns will envy Hadleyburg for being deemed worthy to safeguard such a huge sum of gold. Edward and Mary conjecture that the anonymous citizen is the deceased Barclay Goodson. In the course of their speculation, Edward reveals a few secrets about "honest" Hadleyburg. Barclay Goodson and Reverend Burgess, respectively, became the most hated men in town, due in part to Edward's cowardice. As it happens, Burgess was falsely accused of committing an unnamed deed, which ruined his reputation. Edward knew Burgess was innocent but withheld the information that would have cleared him because Edward feared public reproach against himself. Still, Edward felt guilty about his role in bringing scandal to Burgess, so he advised Burgess to leave town until the crisis passed. Meanwhile, Edward convinced the townsfolk that Goodson withheld the self-incriminating information. Shocked by Edward's revelations, Mary wavers between outrage and acceptance but ultimately supports her husband's actions. They alternately indulge in fantasies about keeping the money and self-reproach for entertaining such "awful" thoughts, when Edward decides to cancel the advertisement. Meanwhile, the printer Mr. Cox, the only other person in

town aware of the sack, has spent a similar evening with his wife. He, too, decides to stop the ad and meets Edward at the newspaper office, but they are too late to prevent the notice from appearing in the next day's paper. The men return to their respective homes, where both couples bicker over the right course of action, wavering between greed and self-condemnation.

Part 2

As news about the mysterious sack of gold in Hadleyburg spreads across the country during the next morning, the town celebrates this new confirmation of its honesty, prompting the townsfolk to suggest that "Hadleyburg" be listed in the dictionary as a synonym for "incorruptible." Pride soon turns into contention as the townsfolk begin to guess at the contents of the envelope. Absorbed in thought and irritable, Mary comes across a letter that she had received earlier from a Howard L. Stephenson, who identifies himself as an associate of Goodson. The letter contains the precise wording of the advice enclosed within the mystery envelope and identifies the late Goodson as the man who spoke it to the stranger. In the letter, Stephenson reports that Goodson generally loathed Hadleyburg but spoke "favorably" of two or three families residing there. He vaguely recalls that Goodson sometimes mentioned a "great service" done for him by someone perhaps named Edward Richards. Stephenson indicates that the man who offered his service to Goodson is the "legitimate heir" of the gold. Since he is uncertain about the details of the good deed and the exact identity of the do-gooder, Stephenson appeals to Edward's honesty and sense of honor to refresh his memory, adding that he fully expects an honest man to relinquish his claim if an error has been made. Finally, he reveals Goodson's advice: "YOU ARE FAR FROM BEING A BAD MAN: GO, AND REFORM."

Mary is elated but not for long, as Edward tries to recall the details of his good deed. After eliminating a series of possible scenarios that include saving his soul, property, and life, Edward "dimly" recalls "rescuing" Goodson from marrying a woman (Nancy Hewitt) who had a "spoonful of Negro blood in her veins." Satisfied with this sketchy memory, he reconstructs the details of the event.

The mood in Hadleyburg improves markedly by the next day. Eighteen other couples have received a similar letter from "Stephenson," with the exception that the name of the respective recipient replaces Edward's. Each husband reconstructs a dubious account of their "service" to Goodson, and each wife dreams of a future of luxury. All the couples accordingly forward their claims to a perplexed Burgess.

Part 3

The residents of Hadleyburg and curious visitors gather at the town hall to learn the identity of the sack's rightful owner. As instructed, Burgess presides over the meeting. He offers warmly enthusiastic praise of the town's honesty and thanks the stranger for giving them this opportunity to display their virtue, as each claimant silently rehearses

his humble acceptance speech. Burgess reads the first claim and identifies Deacon Billson as its owner. As the crowd cheers, Lawyer Wilson objects and charges Billson with plagiarism. Burgess concedes that he also has a claim from Wilson, which he reads aloud and finds the same piece of advice, "You are far from being a bad man. Go, and reform." A vigorous debate ensues, when the tanner points out that Billson's claim differs by including the extra word very. At the urging of the crowd, Burgess opens the sack to retrieve the sealed envelope. Instead, he finds two envelopes, and one of them is labeled, "Not to be examined until all written communications which have been addressed to the Chair—if any—have been read." Burgess opens the unmarked envelope, which contains a note that reads, "Go, and reform—or, mark my words—some day, for your sins, you will die and go to hell or Hadleyburg— TRY AND MAKE IT THE FORMER." The note exposes the greed of the claimants and the hypocrisy of the town.

The crowd erupts in pandemonium over the claimants's deceit, when Burgess announces that he has additional claims. One by one, he slowly reads the names of the other claimants. The crowd delights in the public humiliation of the town's upstanding members. Edward tries to stop the proceedings and relieve his guilt, but Burgess interrupts him and continues reciting the rest of the names. Resigned to impending humiliation, Edward and Mary wait for their names to be called. Burgess, however, concludes after reading only eighteen claims. As the crowd cheers the sole virtuous couple, Edward and Mary cringe as their hypocrisy settles around them.

Burgess then opens the second envelope, which reveals the entirety of the stranger's scheme as well as a suggestion that the gold be used to establish a "Committee on Propagation and Preservation of the Hadleyburg Reputation." The coins, however, are merely gilded slugs. The crowd decides to auction the counterfeit coins and donate the proceeds to Edward, the "one clean man left." A stranger, "who looked like an amateur detective gotten up as an impossible English earl," escalates the bidding and purchases the sack for $1282. He declares that he will stamp the coins with the slogan "Go and reform" along with the names of the eighteen claimants, when Dr. Clay Harkness offers the man forty thousand dollars for the sack. The crowd approves the deal, singing "You are f-a-r from being a b-a-a-d man-a-a-a-a-men!"

Part 4

After receiving payment from Harkness, the stranger writes four checks in the amount of $1500 and one for $34,000, each payable to "Bearer." Keeping one of the smaller checks for himself, he delivers the rest to the Edward along with a note extolling their honesty, which proved that he failed to "corrupt the whole town." Later, Edward receives a message from Burgess explaining that he refrained from naming him during the proceedings as a gesture of gratitude for Edward's advice to leave town before news of his scandal broke. Reminded of his cowardice and stung by guilt, Edward burns the checks.

As time passes, Edward and Mary become sick and paranoid. They believe that Burgess knows about Edward's cowardly silence, and that his gratitude masks a sarcastic accusation. Nearing death, they murmur bits of the truth while their nurses circulate rumors. Edward asks Burgess to visit him before he dies. Confessing his past and present cowardice, Edward tells a roomful of admirers that Burgess had refrained from naming Edward at that fateful town meeting, and "the dying man passed away without knowing that once more he had done poor Burgess a wrong."

During the town's next election, Harkness uses the counterfeit coins as a campaign gimmick to unseat the incumbent Pinkerton, whose name was stamped on them along with the other duped claimants. Harkness wins by a landslide. His first official act is to change the town's name and to delete the word not from its motto, thereby establishing "an honest town once more."

Part 1

Part 1 Summary

Hadleyburg is a small town that has long been noted for its honesty and uprightness. This reputation has remained intact for three generations and is something the town's residents are extremely proud of. The virtues of honesty are taught to each of Hadleyburg's residents from the time they are babies, and those lessons continue through all the years of schooling. Further, great care is taken to ensure that temptations are removed from the paths of the town's young people so that the lessons in honesty will have every chance to be absorbed and ingrained in their characters. Further, while the residents of nearby towns seem to begrudge the citizens of Hadleyburg their due recognition, it is also assumed that any young man coming from Hadleyburg need not supply any other references; his citizenship in that town is all that is needed to vouch for his character.

Life in Hadleyburg continues in this manner until one day a stranger passing through the town is unfortunately offended in some manner. While the citizens of Hadleyburg generally do not care about strangers or their opinions, it would have been wise for them to make an exception in this case, because this particular stranger is a bitter and vengeful man. So grievous is the offense committed against him that the man spends the better part of the ensuing year trying to devise a scheme that will bring down the entire town and attack the very thing each citizen holds dear - their honesty.

Six months later, the man returns to Hadleyburg late one evening bearing a heavy sack. He stops outside the home of a man named Richards who works as a cashier in the town's bank, and with the sack on his shoulder, he knocks at the door. The cashier's wife yells out for him to enter; he does so and then asks for the woman's husband. When she explains that he is out and will not return until later, the stranger tells her that he had come to leave the sack in his care until it can be delivered to its rightful owner. The stranger tells Mrs. Richards that there is a paper attached to the sack which explains everything, and then he leaves.

Mrs. Richards' curiosity is aroused, and so as soon as the stranger leaves her home, she goes to the sack to retrieve the paper. As she reads the letter, she realizes that the sack contains gold coins in the amount of forty thousand dollars. Almost by instinct, she drops the letter and goes to lock her door and draw her shades before returning to the letter to continue reading. As she reads, Mrs. Richards learns that the stranger was a gambler who had arrived in Hadleyburg sometime during the preceding two years. He had lost all of his money and, ashamed of the position in which he found himself,, had begged in the dark of night and had the fortune of receiving twenty dollars from a Hadleyburg citizen. The stranger had been able to parlay the twenty dollars into a sizable profit at the gambling table and had now returned to Hadleyburg to repay the man who had been so kind to him. The stranger does not know who the man is, but he is confident that given the town's honest fiber, the right man will be found and given the

sack of money. He goes on to say that the man can be identified by a remark he made to the stranger on the night he gave him the twenty dollars. Before ending his letter, the stranger suggests the right man can be identified either publicly or privately and provides specific instructions for conducting each type of inquiry.

As Mrs. Richards contemplates all that she has read, she finds herself wishing that it had been her husband who provided the kindness to the stranger; then she admonishes herself to remember that the money in the sack was obtained through gambling - an illicit activity in the eyes of Hadleyburg's citizens. Before long, her husband Edward arrives home, clearly agitated by the fact that he must work such long hours. After a few moments of self-pity, he notices the sack and asks his wife what it contains. When she tells him of all that has transpired that evening, he seems awestruck and comments that the entire episode seems like some sort of adventure that one only reads about. When he suggests to his wife that they bury the money and burn the papers, she cuts him off, saying that it is getting late and she is fearful of burglars. After some discussion, they agree that the best method for identifying the rightful owner of the money is through a public inquiry, and so Mr. Richards leaves to go to the newspaper printer so an announcement of the inquiry can be made. He meets the printer in the street and is told that it may be too late for the announcement to appear the next day but that an effort to do so will be made.

When Mr. Richards returns home, he and his wife are too excited to sleep, and so they pass the time trying to guess who might have gifted the stranger with the twenty dollars. They both agree that the deceased Barclay Goodson must have been the benefactor. As they discuss this possibility, Mrs. Richards mentions the fact that aside from Reverend Burgess, Barclay Goodson had been the most hated man in Hadleyburg. When her husband suggests that perhaps Reverend Burgess isn't as mean-spirited as the town believes, his wife demands to know his reasons for saying this. Edward tells his wife that Reverend Burgess is actually innocent of the wrongdoing he had been accused of and that he (Edward) had information that could have exonerated Reverend Burgess; he had kept silent because he was afraid of the town's reprisals against him. At first his wife is shocked, but after a few moments, she tells her husband that she understands why he chose to act as he did and that under the same circumstances, she would have done the same. At the same time, she wonders what Reverend Burgess thinks of them, until her husband puts her fears to rest by telling her that Reverend Burgess had no idea that Edward could have saved him. Mrs. Richards tells her husband that given Reverend Burgess's demeanor, she should have known that he wasn't aware that Edward could have helped him. She goes on to say that when others observe Reverend Burgess talking to her, they tease her and refer to Burgess as "her friend," which makes her wish that he wouldn't speak to her at all. Edward tells his wife that Burgess is being friendly to her because, although Edward had not had the courage to come forth with the evidence of Burgess' innocence, he *had* protected him from the town's anger to an extent by warning him to leave town until the episode blew over. He had then managed to get the entire affair attributed to Goodson, and because Goodson is now dead, there is little chance that the truth will be revealed.

With that matter settled, the Richards' spend the rest of the evening lost in the solitude of their own thoughts. Eventually, Mrs. Richards starts to murmur portions of the Lord's Prayer, punctuating it with thoughts regarding their predicament. She soon begins to think that perhaps they had acted in haste and that maybe they should have kept the money rather than publishing the notice regarding the inquiry in the paper.

Meanwhile, the newspaper publisher, a man named Cox, has gone home and told his wife about what has happened. When his wife remarks that the only people who know about the sack are themselves and the Richardses, Cox leaves the house and goes in search of Richards. Meanwhile, Edward, having come to the same realization with his wife, is on his way to find Cox. The two men meet in the street, and as they affirm that no one else knows of the money, they are approached by a boy. Cox tells the boy not to ship the mail until he is instructed to do so. It is too late, though; due to a change in the timetables, the mail has already left. The two men walk away disappointed and wondering about all that might have been.

When Edward arrives home and tells his wife that it is too late to stop the notice of the public inquiry, she is clearly disappointed. Her disappointment soon turns to anger, and she admonishes her husband for acting in such haste. She tells him that had he stopped to think, he would have realized that since the rightful owner of the money is dead and has no heirs, they could have kept the money and no one would have known. When her husband reminds her that he had done exactly what the note ordered him to do, Mrs. Richards says that it almost seems as though some sort of divine intervention had brought the money to them and that perhaps they have been wrong to question it. Edward tells his wife that he had simply acted as he and all other residents of Hadleyburg had been trained to behave since their infancy, to which she replies that perhaps their honesty isn't as strong a virtue as they had believed it to be; after all, both of them had considered keeping the money.

The couple falls silent again, and then Mrs. Richards tells her husband that she thinks he is trying to guess the remark that the letter said would identify the anonymous benefactor; she admits that she is doing the same thing. They agree to pass the rest of the night trying to guess what the secret remark might be. The same scene is being played out at the Cox's home, while across town, the telegraph office is open much later than usual; the foreman has been given an assignment by the Associated Press to provide a detailed account of the mystery of the coin-filled sack.

Part 1 Analysis

As this story begins, we are given a description of the town of Hadleyburg, based primarily upon the town's reputation for honesty and uprightness. We learn how these virtues are ingrained in every resident from infancy and that great efforts are made to remove temptation from the paths of the town's young people during their most impressionable years.

Early on in the story, though, we learn that this reputation for honesty seems to exist only in the minds of the residents and not necessarily in actual practice. The first indication of this comes when Mrs. Richards, realizing that the sack contains a significant amount of money, decides that she should lock her door and draw her shades. Earlier, when the stranger had come to her door, Mrs. Richards had not felt compelled to get up to answer his knock; instead she had invited him in without getting up from her seat. After his departure, though, she insists on locking the doors, fearful of being left alone in the house with the money. Certainly, it is easy to see the irony in this; the residents of a town that prides itself on the honesty of its citizens shouldn't have to worry about locking their doors when there is extra money in the house.

This series of events provides us with our first indication that Hadleyburg's reputation for honesty may be in serious danger of becoming tarnished. We begin to see that although the town's citizens still publicly cling to the notion that they are the most trustworthy people in the region, their private actions indicate otherwise. This becomes more evident as the story unfolds.

Another example of this is seen shortly after the stranger leaves the sack of coins in the Richards' home. Rather than wondering who the money may belong to, Mrs. Richards bemoans the fact that her husband had not been the one who demonstrated the kindness that is now being repaid. While she eventually comes to the realization that the money was ill-gotten - gambling is considered an illicit activity in Hadleyburg - and decides that she doesn't want any part of it, the fact remains that her first thought was a dishonest one. Similarly, her husband's initial reaction is to "bury the money and burn the papers," again indicating that perhaps the citizens of Hadleyburg aren't as forthright as their reputation would indicate.

Another irony exists in the fact that Edward chose to let Reverend Burgess take the blame for a crime he did not commit even though he had information that could have vindicated the man. Edward's decision was based on his fear that he would have borne the brunt of the town's rage if they knew the truth, providing a further indication that the town's reputation isn't nearly as stellar as they would like everyone to think. Adding to this is the fact that Edward kept his actions a secret from everyone, including his wife. When he finally does tell her the story, Mrs. Richards initially seems angry at his betrayal but then quickly assures her husband that she understands why he acted as he did and that under the same circumstances, she would have done the same thing.

Even so, we see that Mrs. Richards is struggling mightily with the dilemma of the money in the sack. As she contemplates what to do, she is praying the Lord's Prayer, but can't seem to get through the line that says "Lead us not into temptation." It is almost as though she feels that if she were to utter that particular line, the right course of action would be made clear; however if she doesn't say the words, she can feel as though she had been given permission to commit the act of deceit.

We also see that this trend toward deception and dishonesty is not confined to the Richardses. Recall that when Edward changes his mind about conducting the public inquiry, he is met in the street by Cox, the newspaper publisher, who had been

harboring the same thoughts. The fact that Cox becomes very angry at Edward for acting so quickly tells us that his penchant for dishonesty runs fairly deep. This is underscored by the fact that although the two men are supposedly friends, they part company that night without bidding each other good-bye.

Our suspicions are confirmed toward the end of the section when Mrs. Richards, clearly frustrated and torn, tells her husband that she thinks that the honesty that has been ingrained in each of the town's residents is an "artificial" honesty. It has not been allowed to take root on it's own, but is something that is simply expected of each person. This tells us that while the reputation for honesty remains, what exists in reality is something entirely different, the nature of which will be revealed as the story unfolds.

Part 2

Part 2 Summary

By the time the next morning arrives, everyone knows about the famous sack in Hadleyburg. The town's principal citizens - a group of nineteen men - spend the better part of the day congratulating each other and basking in the town's new-found fame. Even the town's "minor" citizens sense the buzz, and by day's end, virtually everyone from the town as well as the surrounding municipalities has made the pilgrimage to the bank to see the sack of coins. Reporters from all over the region come to town as well so that they could tell the story of the mysterious stranger and the sack of gold.

By the end of the week, the town returns to a state of relative calm. One of the town's citizens, a man named Jack Halliday, begins to notice that a sense of sadness seems to have permeated the town, and by week's end, he says that virtually everyone is moody and absentminded. He is correct in his observation, for by this time, many of the town's residents have become preoccupied with trying to figure out what it was that Goodson had said to the passing stranger. While their attempts to guess are at first met with the resistance of their wives, by week's end, even the wives have succumbed to the temptation and have joined their husbands in trying to solve the mystery.

With one week remaining before the day appointed for the public inquiry, the town of Hadleyburg has become eerily quiet and desolate. Like many other families in town, the Richardses spend virtually every evening in silence trying to come up with the remark that Goodson had made.

One day, the postman delivers a letter to the Richards home, which Edward ignores because he does not recognize the postmark. On her way to bed, Mrs. Richards spots the letter and opens it. As she reads the letter, she quickly learns that it was written by the stranger who had left the sack of coins. In the letter, he confirms that the man who had demonstrated the act of kindness toward him was Goodson. Acknowledging that Goodson is now dead and has no heirs, the stranger goes on to say that he seems to recall Goodson telling him that Edward had once done him a great service; if this is indeed true, the stranger writes, then the money in the sack should be kept by him as a gesture of gratitude on Goodson's behalf. If, on the other hand, Edward did not perform this kindness, the stranger says he is relying upon him to seek and find the right man. The stranger closes the letter by providing the "secret" remark.

The Richardes are overjoyed by this revelation and spend the next half hour basking in the contentment brought about by their newly found wealth. However, when Mrs. Richards asks her husband about his act of kindness toward Goodson, she is dismayed to learn that he cannot tell her what he had done, because he had made a promise to Goodson that he would never tell. Not wanting her husband break a promise, Mrs. Richards accepts this explanation and promises never to ask him about the matter again.

That night, neither Edward nor his wife can sleep, though each has a different reason for their wakefulness. Mrs. Richards spends the better part of the evening planning precisely how she will spend the money, while Edward tries in vain to remember precisely what act of kindness he had committed, if in fact he actually performed any kindness at all. He eventually reasons that if the stranger had remembered his name, then there must be some validity to the claim. With that settled, he tries to remember what he might have done for Goodson to make such an impression. Unfortunately, each time he thinks he may recall some small incident or event that might be the kindness in question, some small detail surfaces that makes the entire incident implausible. Eventually, Edward recalls a time long ago when Goodson had been contemplating marriage to a girl who had some Negro blood in her lineage. Edward remembers telling others in Hadleyburg about this revelation, and soon enough word spread and Goodson decided against marrying the young lady. Certain that this is the kindness referred to in the stranger's letter, Edward falls asleep.

Unbeknownst to the Richardses, each of the town's eighteen additional principal citizens had received an identical letter, and so similar scenes were being played out in their homes as well. The next day, Jack Halliday notices that the tormented expressions worn by the town's citizens have given way to looks of peace and happiness. He is unable to understand the reasons behind the change. Meanwhile, a builder who had come from a neighboring state in the hope of capitalizing on the town's newly found fortune receives separate visits from the wives of eleven of the principal citizens. Each woman tells him that she is contemplating building a new home but asks that he not mention her visit until the Monday following the public inquiry. While some of the nineteen letter recipients are content to dream of the ways in which they will spend their money, others actually begin spending it by making purchases on credit. As the day of the public inquiry draws nearer, the nineteen principal citizens once again become anxious. One by one, they seek out Reverend Burgess and hand him an envelope with instructions to open it at Friday's inquiry.

Part 2 Analysis

In this section of the story, we see that the Richardses are not the only residents of Hadleyburg who are tempted by the prospect of acquiring $40,000; each of the town's nineteen principal residents is similarly drawn into the scheme concocted by the stranger, and it is significant that not one of them resists the temptation. This fact provides further proof that the moral fiber of the town's residents isn't nearly as strong as its reputation would indicate. Also, we once again see that Edward is not nearly as honest with his wife as we would expect, as he lies to her regarding the kindness he had allegedly extended to Goodson. To make matters worse, he insinuates that he is being truthful when he asks his wife "do you think I would lie?"

It is clear that Edward *is* lying, of course. He knows that he did not extend an act of kindness toward Goodson; in fact, like most of the town's residents, he hadn't even liked the man. However, for the sake of the money which, by his own admission would help alleviate a number of his problems, he chooses to conveniently forget about his dislike

of Goodson; by the end of the evening, he has convinced himself that he really did do something kind for the man. The stranger made no mistake when he chose to fashion his scheme around a man whom the town disliked. By doing so, he is able to further demonstrate the extent of their hypocrisy when all of the townspeople suddenly and conveniently "remember" the kind things they had done for the man.

Despite all of this, it also becomes somewhat apparent that not all of the town's residents are fundamentally dishonest; indeed, we are only able to observe the actions of the town's principal citizens. While the actions of the remainder of the citizens are not described, we are provided with some indication through the observations of Jack Halliday. Remember, Halliday is not among the nineteen principal citizens, and so he is initially at a loss to explain why the town's mood has grown somber and then is equally puzzled when everyone appears to be happy again. While he knows the money is in the town and that there will be a public inquiry to identify its owner, it apparently never occurs to him that if he could guess the "mystery" remark, he would be rightfully entitled to the money.

This raises questions regarding the increased propensity for dishonesty among the town's more influential residents versus its less affluent citizens. It is possible that Twain is using this story to illustrate the dangers of power, in that he shows how the people who are among the most respected in the community are the ones who prove least trustworthy.

Finally, it is interesting that despite the fact that the town's residents feel that they are, on the whole, an admirable bunch, the stranger makes a point of telling the residents that one of their own, namely Goodson, had disliked many of them. This indicates that perhaps there is a great deal of unspoken animosity among the town's residents.

Part 3

Part 3 Summary

The day of the long-anticipated public inquiry finally arrives. The town hall is packed with citizens and visitors alike as well as more than a few members of the press. The sack of coins has taken center stage and is the focus of nearly everyone's attention. The nineteen principal citizens are there, along with their wives, who are all gazing at the sack and planning how they will spend the money. Meanwhile, their husbands are silently rehearsing their speeches of gratitude. Finally, Reverend Burgess rises to begin the inquiry. He begins by recounting the series of events that had transpired in the previous weeks before reminding those assembled of the town's legacy of honesty. He asks those assembled to give their promise that they will each do their part to ensure that this legacy is protected for future generations. Then he thanks the stranger who, through his actions, has allowed the town of Hadleyburg to put their reputation on display for the world to see. With these formalities out of the way, Burgess reaches into his pocket for the envelope that will identify the recipient of the money.

Burgess opens the envelope's seal and slowly reads the contents of the letter, culminating with the "secret" remark. When he finishes, he announces that the letter's author and the rightful heir of the money, is Mr. Billson. The entire hall falls silent, for they are astonished that it was Billson who had performed the act of kindness. As Billson rises, so does Lawyer Wilson, who immediately disputes the legitimacy of Billson's claim. Meanwhile, the remaining seventeen principal citizens and their wives sit in stunned silence, trying to figure out exactly what has just transpired.

When Billson asks Wilson why he is standing, Wilson accuses him of stealing his note from Burgess so that he could learn the wording of the secret phrase. When Billson denies any wrongdoing, the entire hall breaks into pandemonium. Burgess restores order and tells the assembly that he can settle the dispute by reading the contents of Wilson's envelope. He retrieves Wilson's envelope from his pocket, opens it and is shocked to find that it contains the same remark. When he notes this aloud, the hall begins to buzz again, this time in utter confusion.

Before long, one of the town's minor citizens rises and wonders aloud if it is possible that both men did make the remark in question. Another minor citizen rises and says that, while it is remotely possible, he doesn't believe that either man gave the stranger twenty dollars. This causes the room to erupt in laughter, which, in turn, causes Billson and Wilson to begin a new round of accusations. One man suggests that one of the two is guilty of eavesdropping on the other. Another man points out that the remarks provided are not identical; Billson's note contains the word "very" while Wilson's does not. This revelation is followed by a request to open the sack so that the test remark can be read and the identity of the town's "first" dishonest citizen revealed.

Burgess opens the sack and retrieves an envelope containing two notes. The first note is marked with instructions that it is not to be read until all letters addressed to the chair (Burgess) have been read. The second note bears the test remark along with a note; in this note, the stranger writes that although he doesn't expect the person to provide a verbatim account of the entire remark, he does expect that they should be able to precisely recall the final fifteen words: "You are far from being a bad man..." Before Burgess can finish, the room erupts, and Wilson is declared the recipient of the money. It takes several minutes for Burgess to restore order, and when he finally does, he finishes reading the test remark, which concludes "Go, and reform - or, mark my words - some day, for your sins, you will die and go to hell or Hadleyburg - TRY AND MAKE IT THE FORMER."

The room falls silent until Jack Halliday makes a remark that sends the whole hall into uproarious laughter. It takes several minutes for Burgess to silence the room, and he reminds the assembly that not only is the town's honor at stake but that now, the reputation of two men, not one, is on the line. Then, choosing his words carefully, Burgess asks the men if they conspired so that they could each share in a portion of the money.

Billson is clearly overcome with the enormity of what has just transpired, but Wilson's training as a lawyer enables him to regain his composure and attempt a plausible explanation for what has just happened. He tells the assembly that he purposely left off the last fifteen words of the remark, because he felt those words attacked the integrity of Hadleyburg. Further, he says that when he was preparing his statement, he was momentarily called away from his desk, and upon his return, he recalls having seen Billson lurking around near his office door. Billson vehemently denies this and is silenced by his friends. The crowd's opinion seems to be swayed in Wilson's favor, and Billson is prevented from speaking further. The crowd exhorts Wilson to collect his due, but he is stopped by Burgess, who reminds them that the final note left by the stranger remains to be read. Before he can read it however, he remembers that he has other envelopes in his pocket that must be read first. He retrieves one, opens it and is astonished to find that the letter also contains the aforementioned remark. This process is repeated with each envelope remaining in Burgess's pocket. Each time a letter's author is revealed, the assembly accuses him of deception and dishonesty.

Meanwhile, the Richardses are quietly observing all that is going on. They are sure that their name is about to be read and that their honor will be destroyed. In an effort to maintain some degree of dignity, Edward rises to address the crowd. However, his intentions are misunderstood, and before he realizes what is happening, he and his wife are being showered with praise. Burgess tells the couple that while it is admirable that they want to speak on behalf of the accused, these men have already sealed their own fates by their actions. Burgess promises Edward that he will have his chance to speak once all the envelopes have been opened, and so, Edward and his wife wait for their name to be called. After Burgess reads the eighteenth name, the Richardses gird themselves for what they are certain will the most embarrassing moment of their lives. Yet, rather than hearing their name read and being added to the long list of people who have been publicly shamed, the Richardses are surprised to hear Burgess announce

that he has read the last of the envelopes. The Richardses are lauded for their honesty and valor by the crowd.

When the crowd settles down, everyone begins to wonder what is to become of the money. Burgess reads the note and tells them that if no one appears to claim the money, it is to be given to the principal citizens of the town and used in a manner that will help to ensure that the town's reputation for honesty remains intact. This remark is met with applause, but then Burgess continues reading. In the final postscript to the note comes the revelation that the entire ordeal was contrived by the stranger. Burgess reads that this stranger had once passed through Hadleyburg and was greatly offended in some way. So great was this offense that the man felt it necessary to exact some sort of revenge, and so he had devised this scheme. After studying the residents for some time, he concluded that the only person he needed to fear was Goodson, for Goodson was not a native of Hadleyburg. After Goodson's death, he was confident that he could put his plan into motion. While it was his goal to entrap each of the nineteen principal residents in his scheme, he said he would have been satisfied if he managed to snare only a few of them. As his final instruction, he writes that if his scheme is successful, the sack should be opened and the Committee on Propagation and Preservation of the Hadleyburg Reputation should be summoned.

The sack is opened, and it is discovered that the coins are not coins at all, but gilded discs of lead. Not one of the principal citizens rises to claim the sack, and so Jack Halliday is appointed custodian and instructed to auction off the sack and give the proceeds to the Richardses. As the bidding begins, the Richardses wonder if they should stop the process and admit that they too had tried to claim the sack of coins. However, as the bidding escalates, they find themselves unable to do so.

Meanwhile, a stranger in the crowd recognizes that not one of the eighteen principals is participating in the bidding. He finds this unacceptable, and in an effort to draw them into the process, begins to bid himself. The bidding finally ends at a price of $1,282, and the sack is given to this stranger. He addresses the crowd and tells them that he can make every one of the leaded coins worth its face value in gold by stamping the faces of the eighteen newly identified dishonest men on them and selling them as novelty items. He asks the crowd's permission to proceed, promising that he will give $10,000 of the proceeds to the Richardses as a show of recognition for their honesty. The crowd gives his approval, and as the man sits, he is approached by one of the town's citizens, a man named Harkness who is running a close race for public office. He and the stranger barter a little for the sack, and it is finally sold to Harkness for $40,000. The stranger gives $1500 to the Richardses and promises to come to their home the next day with the remainder of what is due to them.

Part 3 Analysis

In this section of the story, we see just how deeply the citizens of Hadleyburg are disliked by those outside the community. We are also given further examples of the extent to which hypocrisy exists within Hadleyburg.

As the inquiry to determine the rightful owners of the money unfolds, we learn that Goodson, whom most of the citizens had assumed performed the mysterious act of kindness, had not even been a native of the town. This tells us that although the residents of the town are quite proud of their reputation for honesty, they readily admit that they are not particularly generous; they assume that generosity of the magnitude in question must have been carried out by someone who is an "outsider." Thus, we begin to see that while honesty is usually seen as a positive virtue, it is not always so; indeed, Goodson was honest in giving his opinion of the town, even though he was well aware that by revealing his true feelings, he would offend most, if not all, of the town's citizens. While he never fully revealed his feeling while alive - most likely because he knew that it was in is best interests to conform to the town's expectations - they are made abundantly clear when the full text of his remark is shared with the crowd gathered at the inquiry. The fact that the crowd laughs uproariously tells us that they don't take his opinion the least bit seriously.

This section also illustrates how easy it is for people to forsake their individual ideals and beliefs in order to conform to those of the larger group. Certainly, the people of Hadleyburg do this as a matter of course; they claim to be honest, forthright people so that they will be accepted in the community, but as we have learned, they all participate in dishonest, backhanded behaviors. The Richardses are a prime example of this. Recall that they are given several opportunities to "come clean" about their involvement in the inquiry, but choose to remain silent so that they do not further provoke the crowd. Similarly, Edward Richards had earlier chosen to let Goodson, an outsider, take the blame for something that Reverend Burgess, a native to the village, had supposedly done. In that case, once again, Edward had chosen the action least likely to result in backlash to himself.

The manner in which the characters in the story are identified also warrants some discussion. As we have read, there are nineteen principal citizens. While they are not all named, we do learn the names of some: Billson, Wilson, Wilcox, and Cox are four of the names mentioned. It is probably no coincidence that these names are similar to each other; it is likely that Twain did this to demonstrate the fact that in most cases, it doesn't matter who the leader in a particular town is. The mere fact that they are in a leadership position is enough to make it likely that they will participate in some sort of dishonest behavior. In contrast, the "minor" citizens are generally not identified by name; rather we know them only based on their professions. It is this group of people, though, who obviously controls the inquiry. This lends further support to the notion that, regardless of a town or person's reputation, given an adequate amount of power and influence, dishonesty and other unsavory behavior is likely to ensue.

Throughout this section, we also see the continued use of irony. One of the most obvious examples comes when Burgess reads the text of the post script to the stranger's note. Recall from previous sections of the story, where Goodson was described as the "best-hated man" in town, and a "soured bachelor" who did not hesitate to tell the rest of the town to "go to Hell." The stranger, in contrast, writes that "Heaven took Goodson" when referring to his death. Certainly, if Goodson were as evil as he was described to be, Heaven would not have been his final destination. This

provides yet another indication that the people of Hadleyburg are not trusting of strangers and consider anyone who is not native to their village to be suspect.

Another example of irony comes near the end of the inquiry, when the Committee on Propagation and Preservation of the Hadleyburg Reputation is summoned to assume guardianship of the sack of coins. First, the fact that such a committee even exists tells us that the community does not put much trust in the ability of their town to maintain its reputation. Second, and perhaps more ironic, is the fact that the Committee is comprised of the eighteen men who have been implicated in the stranger's scheme. Again, we see that influence and power seem to lead to corruption and wrong-doing.

Part 4

Part 4 Summary

It is midnight before the last of the congratulators leaves the Richards' home. When they are finally alone, Mrs. Richards asks her husband if he thinks they are to blame for what has happened to them. Edward replies that he believes that everything is ordered by destiny and that they are unable to escape what is planned for them. When she asks her husband if he intends to stay at his job, Mr. Richards replies that he plans to resign in the morning.

The next morning, the stranger goes to retrieve the sack at the appointed time and then meets with Harkness to get the rest of the money promised him. At eleven o'clock, he silently delivers the money to the Richardses. As Mrs. Richards watches him walk away, she is certain that he is the same man who had left the sack of coins in her living room four weeks ago.

When Mrs. Richards shows her husband the envelope, he assumes that since the envelope is quite thin, their payment is being received in the form of checks. This upsets him, for he believes that the checks will be bogus and that it is just another ploy by the stranger to ensure that the Richardes are revealed as corrupt people. He is on his way to the fire to burn the checks when he realizes that they are not only legitimate but are worth $38,500, rather than the $10,000 they were promised. Enclosed with the checks is a note that commends the Richardes for their honesty and explains that because they proved the stranger wrong, he is awarding them the entire sum. Reading these words makes Edward feel quite miserable, for he knows they are not true. Telling his wife he feels like a hypocrite, he burns the note in the fire.

Shortly after he does this, a messenger arrives with another note, this time from Reverend Burgess. In his note, Burgess also commends Edward for his honesty and tells him that he did not reveal the fact that Edward had also submitted an envelope to the people gathered at the inquiry because he wanted to repay the kindness that Edward had shown him several years earlier. Edward burns this note as well and then, turning to his wife, he tells her he wishes he were dead.

In the days that follow, the Richardses seem to be overly sensitive to anything that might reveal their true actions. Church sermons which at one time seemed routine, now feel as though they are preached directly to them. They do their best to avoid the townspeople and fear that their house servant has betrayed them to Burgess. Eventually, the paranoia becomes so strong that Edward begins to believe that the note of explanation Burgess sent actually contains clues that he is going to expose them.

The couple's health deteriorates rapidly under the stress. As news of their illness spreads, so does word that they received $38,500 rather than the $8,500 originally promised. Further, one nurse reports that Edward said that he had destroyed the

checks. Eventually, word gets out that Edward had also attempted to claim the sack of coins and that while Burgess had originally tried to protect him, he had eventually betrayed his confidence; Burgess vehemently disputes this.

After about a week, it is clear that the Richardses are dying. They summon Burgess to their home so that they can confess that they, too, had attempted to claim the sack. As Edward makes this confession, he also confesses that he alone had known the facts that could have saved Burgess but had chosen to conceal this information to protect himself. He says he knows that Burgess exposed him in revenge. Burgess denies doing this, but it is too late; Edward dies. His wife joins him in death a short time later.

In the months that follow, the town elects to change its name, though the new name is not revealed in the story. The town's motto changes as well; the new motto is "Lead us into temptation" which, according to the author, once again makes the town an honest one.

Part 4 Analysis

In contrast to the previous section, which was characterized by the raucous environment of the public inquiry, this section of the story takes on a more tragic tone. As we watch the Richardses try to come to terms with all that has happened to them, we see that although they were just as tempted as the others by the money, they are now conflicted and miserable. Their reactions are typical of anyone who has a guilty conscience; they become despondent and, above all, paranoid. Suspicious of everything and everyone, they become recluses and quite antisocial.

It is interesting to note that in his position as a bank cashier, Edward certainly would have been exposed to temptation in the past; as far as we know, though, he had never succumbed. What made this particular set of circumstances different was the fact that he could have kept the money without anyone knowing about it. Further, if this story had played out differently, and if Edward had not been so quick to publish the note about the inquiry, he probably could have kept the money with no one being the wiser. Had that occurred, it is likely accurate to say that Edward wouldn't have been as tormented; after all, his word and therefore his honor would never have been called into question.

This story then, is not so much about how one man was able to bring down an entire town, as it is an illustration of how very important a man's integrity and honor are. The fact that Edward knows that he will never again be respected after being exposed as a liar and a coward reminds us that maintaining one's integrity must be placed above all else.

Finally, the fact that the town's name and motto were changed after this episode serves to put Hadleyburg and its stellar reputation back on equal footing with every other town and city. We know now that Hadleyburg is indeed no better than any other locale and that no town is immune from temptation and corruption.

Characters

John Wharton Billson

Billson is a Deacon with the nickname "Shadbelly." He is the first of the nineteen claiming ownership of the sack. When Burgess reads his name, the crowd doubts that Billson could have been so generous, shouting: *"Billson*! Oh, come, this is *too* thin! Twenty dollars to a stranger-or *anybody-Billson*"; Wilson falsely accuses him of plagiarism.

Reverend Burgess

The letter attached to the sack authorizes Burgess to break the seals of the sack and the enclosed envelope. Unaware that Edward Richards concealed information that could have cleared him of wrongdoing in a previous scandal, Burgess regards Edward as his savior for advising him to leave town. Burgess repays his perceived debt by not announcing Edward's name at the town meeting, which leads everyone to believe that Edward is the only truly honest man in town. After the stranger gives the Richardses the proceeds from the auction, Burgess sends them a note that accounts for his action at the town meeting. On his deathbed, Edward burns Burgess once more, since he confesses that Burgess purposely withheld Edward's name at the town meeting.

Mr. Cox

Mr. Cox is the printer of the town's newspaper. He is the second person to learn about the gold sack when Edward Richards submits the advertisement to him. Cox dutifully forwards the information to the central office, but hurries back to stop it, hoping to keep the money for himself. At the office, he meets Edward, who has the same idea, but they are too late, since the newspaper printing schedules changed that day, and the clerk submitted the information earlier than usual. Like the Richardses, the Coxes argue about the haste with which they decided to publicly advertise the sack, reasoning that had they only waited, they could have quietly kept the money for themselves.

Barclay Goodson

At the time the story begins, Barclay Goodson is dead. The town surmises that only Goodson was generous enough to give a stranger twenty dollars. Though he once lived in Hadleyburg, he was not born or raised there. He scandalized the town in the past. Although Mary Richards calls him the "besthated" man in town, Goodson was wrongfully accused of informing Burgess that news of his scandal was about to break. While Goodson generally regarded Hadleyburg as an "honest" town, he also thought it was "narrow, self-righteous, and stingy." He was supposed to marry Nancy Hewitt, but

he broke the engagement at the implicit behest of the community who discovered that she had a "spoonful of Negro blood."

Jack Halliday

A minor character, Jack Halliday provides ironic commentary on present events in Hadleyburg. He is described as a "loafing, good-natured, no-account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boys' friend, stray-dogs' friend, typical 'Sam Lawson' of the town." According to the narrator, Halliday "noticed everything." He also guides the reader through the foolish behavior of the town, indicating by humorous conjectures that Deacon Billson was happy because a neighbor broke his leg, and that Gregory Yates rejoiced when his mother-in-law died. His "insider" perspective reveals the town's hypocrisy despite its virtuous reputation. Halliday's observations about town life echo the ironic tone of the omniscient narrator.

Dr. Clay Harkness

"Dr." Clay Harkness appears briefly at the end of the story as a charlatan doctor and political candidate. One of the "two rich men" in town, he made his fortune by patenting a popular medicine. Displaying a "strong appetite" for money, Harkness intends to campaign against Pinkerton in an upcoming legislative election. If elected, he would plan the route for a new railway and reap the financial rewards. He purchases the worthless sack of gilt slugs for $40,000 from the stranger who had bought it at auction after the town meeting. During his campaign, Harkness distributes the fake coins— after stamping the names of the eighteen hypocrites on them—to remind the town especially of Pinkerton's compromised reputation. He wins the election by a landslide.

Nancy Hewitt

Mentioned only once, Nancy Hewitt is a minor character who does not appear in the story. According to Edward, she was supposed to marry Goodson, who broke the engagement for unknown reasons. The townsfolk later "discovered" that she had a "spoonful of Negro blood." Edward believes that he passed on this information to Goodson, the "great service" that justifies his claim to the sack of gold. Hewitt's presence in the narrative also implies the racist sentiment of the town.

Offended Stranger

"Mysterious" and "big," the offended Stranger is the man that corrupts Hadleyburg. Little else is known about him. Bearing a grudge against the town for an unnamed insult, the stranger carries out a plan that exposes the town's famous "incorruptible" honesty as a sham. His plot begins when he delivers a sack of fake gold to the Richardses, which throws the town into a greedy frenzy. Critics often identify the Stranger as a Satan figure, since his mischief centers around his "fiendish sack" and brings him "evil joy." He

also might be the "Henry L. Stephenson" whose signature appears on the claimants's letters. He also might by the stranger who purchases the sack at auction for $1282 and suggests stamping the names of the greedy townsfolk on the gilt slugs to remind everyone of their foolish greed.

Omniscient Narrator

An *omniscient*, or all knowing, narrator tells the story of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." The narrator knows the innermost thoughts and emotions of the characters and tells the reader their motives and desires. For instance, the manner in which the narrator details Edward's recollection of "saving" Barclay Goodson informs the reader that Edward's account is fictional and exaggerated. Here, the narrator also alludes to the frailty of human nature and its will to justify self-deceit in the face of temptation. Similarly, the narrator reports Mary's thoughts and struggles as she decides whether to keep the money. The narrator appears to empathize with the characters since he knows their agony and self-reproach, which encourages the reader's empathy. Through the narrator's ironic tone, the reader becomes aware of "the secret" of Hadleyburg, but also must be wary of adopting the narrator's point of view, since it may be unreliable.

Pinkerton

Hadleyburg's banker and one of the "two rich men" in town, Pinkerton is described as "little, mean, smirking, oily." Rubbing his "sleek palms" together, he boasts that the sack of gold certi- fies Hadleyburg's honest reputation. Among the nineteen claimants, he too receives a letter from "Stephenson" and forwards a claim to Burgess. Near the end of the story, Pinkerton loses the election to "Dr." Clay Harkness, who distributed fake coins stamped with Pinkerton's name. Though no guiltier than the rest, Pinkerton is perhaps singled out for this heightened humiliation because of his professional association with money.

Edward Richards

A hard-working man of modest means, Richards is Hadleyburg's bank cashier and one of the "nineteen principal citizens" of the town. Though some of these residents acquired their status through wealth and power, Edward's respectability appears to be based on strength of character. Though he and his wife are poor, Mary is comforted that "we have our good name." At the start of the story, Edward has little aspirations for material gain. Although he grumbles about working hard, it is a "moment's irritation" and a simple kiss from Mary cheers him up. His first reaction to the sack of gold reflects his sense of honesty. He advertises the sack in order to bolster the town's reputation for honesty, but Edward entertains notions of keeping the money for himself. He complains: "Always at the grind, grind, grind, on a salary—another man's slave, and he sitting at home in his slippers, rich and comfortable." Though well intentioned at heart, Edward fears public disapproval. This fear explains his cowardice, particularly during Burgess's

scandal, when he withheld evidence and let Goodson take the blame for Burgess's absence. At the town meeting, Edward again submits to his fear of public opinion, cowering in silence and shame as the crowd praises his virtue. Edward eventually owns up to his cowardly deeds n his deathbed, and in the process damages Burgess's reputation again.

Mary Richards

A minor character, Mary is the "dutiful wife," who supports her husband's dubious logic and actions. Introduced as a model of female Christian piety, Mary is Edward's wife, whose morality also is shaped by public opinion and applied in the spirit of practicality. For example, when she learns that Edward withheld the truth about Burgess, she wavers between condemning and excusing him. As she discovers his other lies, she rationalizing her husband's behavior on a relative scale of moral conduct.

Howard L. Stevenson

Non-existent, Stephenson is merely a fictitious persona conjured by the offended stranger to facilitate his corruption of Hadleyburg. The signature of "Howard L. Stephenson" appears on the letters sent to the nineteen claimants, each of whom believes he is the sole recipient. Each letter reveals the identity of the person who gave twenty dollars to the stranger (Goodson) as well as his advice, the conditions which satisfy a claim to the gold. The letter suggests that Stephenson was Goodson's guest. It also relates Goodson's true opinion of the town. Part of the offended stranger's ruse, the letter tells each recipient that Goodson mentioned him by name for doing him some "great service," which entitles him to the gold. The letter-writer concludes that he is "almost sure" of the name Goodson mentioned, so he appeals to their fabled honesty to satisfy his inquiry.

Tanner, Hatter, Saddler, and the Mob

These characters form the crowd that gathers at the town hall. With their cheers and jeers, they typify a "mob." Expressing strong opinions, they act in unison to shame everyone into agreeing with their perspective. Joyous in the misfortunes of others, the mob ridicules the nineteen claimants. The power of a mob works by intimidation, which plays on an individual's fear of exclusion.

Thurlow G. Wilson

The second to claim ownership of the sack, "Lawyer Wilson" appears at the town meeting. As Billson "humbly" accepts it, Wilson charges him with plagiarism, claiming that Billson sneaked into his office and read the note while he was away from his desk. He uses this lie to explain the presence of two claims that seem identical. At first the crowd sympathizes with him, but Wilson eventually becomes an object of ridicule when

Burgess reveals there are more claims. Earlier, Wilson and his wife plan a pretentious "fancy-dress" ball upon receipt of Stephenson's letter.

Gregory Yates, L. Ingoldsby Sargent, Nicholas Whitworth, and Others

Mentioned at the town meeting, these characters have submitted claims for the gold. Each one deceitfully attempts to claim ownership and suffers the consequences of public humiliation.

Themes

Hypocrisy

Several narrative elements render the honest reputation of Hadleyburg suspect from the beginning. The narrator describes a town that "care[s] not a rap for strangers or their opinions," while a couple of its residents so severely offend a stranger that he feels compelled to wreck revenge against the whole town. After the stranger delivers the sack of gold to the Richardses, Mary becomes anxious about theft, exclaiming, "Mercy on us, and the door not locked!" She regains composure only after she "listens awhile for burglars." The suspicion, fear, and malice evinced by these events belie the town's "unsmirched" honesty and suggest that an imperfect reality lurks beneath the surface. The real nature of Hadleyburg becomes apparent as the story progresses. In the privacy of their homes the townsfolk slander each other, revealing the mutual hatred that exists in the community. For instance, Goodson ranks as the "best-hated," followed by Burgess. Edward's silence not only causes an undeserved scandal for Burgess, but his deception also leads the townsfolk to blame Goodson for Burgess's rapid departure from the town. In addition, Edward hides his involvement in the scandal from Mary, because he fears that she would expose him. He even admits that he only warned Burgess after he was sure that his actions were undetectable. Edward says, "[A]fter a few days I saw that no one was going to suspect me [of warning Burgess], and after that I got to feeling glad I did it." Edward's revelations to Mary suggest that even before the tempting sack of gold appeared, a complex web of selfinterest and deceit ensnared Hadleyburg that contradicts its boastful claims of thorough integrity. Hypocrisy, not honesty, defines the town's character, since the residents preach honesty but practice selfinterest and deceit.

Morality, Ethics and the Innateness of Human Sinfulness

The story of Hadleyburg teaches a moral lesson to both characters and readers alike. The town's secrets raise a series of moral questions. For instance, would the Richardses have been right to keep the gold since it would not have "hurt" anybody? Was it ethical for Edward to conceal the evidence that could have cleared Burgess? Mary justifies her husband's actions by reasoning that they could ill-afford to bring public disapproval upon them. Furthermore, she claims that as long as Burgess did not "know that [Edward] could have saved him ... that makes [withholding the information] a great deal better." Edward soothes his guilty conscience by warning Burgess of impending trouble, but only when he ensures that "no one was going to suspect me." Such decisions demonstrate the self-serving interests of human nature, which tends to make unethical choices when confronted by difficult situations, and as Edward's character illustrates, cowardice further complicates a lack of ethical conviction. Besides Edward and Mary, other townsfolk succumb to the same temptation offered by the sack of gold, including the Coxes, the Wilsons, and the Billsons. In this way, the story represents an

honest, universal response of human nature to the temptation of "easy" money. Although the residents of Hadleyburg are not consciously predisposed to sin, their collective response suggests the innate weakness of human nature.

The Eden Myth and the "Fortunate Fall"

Critics have described "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as a story of "the fortunate fall." In other words, the moral regeneration comes through learning from past mistakes. Thematically similar to the biblical story of Adam and Eve and John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the town's debacle results in improved understanding, or as Mary says, protected and untested virtue is as sturdy as a house of cards. Although the townsfolk lose their "Eden," in the process they learn a practical means to achieve honesty. After their hypocrisy is exposed, Hadleyburg will seek out temptation in order to test and solidify their virtue, which the town's modified motto indicates: "Lead us into temptation." The reformed town realizes that its survival depends on trading its smug standard of honesty for an authentic, provable version.

Individual versus Society

Mary and Edward's dilemma in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" illuminates the influence of communal values on the lives of individuals, especially how those values override individual judgment. The town hall scene dramatizes the destructive and seductive nature of conforming to a group identity. Assuming a "mob" or "herd" mentality, the crowd condemns or praises at the least provocation. For instance, when Wilson's accuses Billson of plagiarism, the crowd erupts and "submerge[s Wilson] in tides of applause," but as soon as they hear of Wilson's fraud, they break into a "pandemonium of delight" and applause becomes ridicule. In "The Role of Satan in 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" Henry Rule likens the crowd's behavior each time it starts jeering loudly to the unthinking and impulsive behavior of the "automatic dog" that "bark[s] itself crazy." Rule's comparison places the crowd's reactions on the level of animals, which instinctively respond to any external stimuli.

Despite the unappealing portrait of the Hadleyburg community as a mob, the townsfolk discourage nonconformity, as in the cases of Burgess and Goodson. On the other hand, conformity reaps benefits, as in the case of the Richardses, who yield to public opinion and net $38,500! Twain ironically represented the real cost of Mary and Edward's "success" by describing their anguished consciences and consequent decay into physical and psychological frailty. Although the story seems to discourage conformity to communal standards, it neither condones the pursuit of individualism. Instead, the story turns a cynical eye toward conditions of American society, which advocates individuality and liberty in principle, but in actuality limits personal freedoms under the guise of community standards. In "The Lie that I Am I: Paradoxes of Identity in Mark Twain's 'Hadleyburg,'" Earl F. Briden and Mary Prescott claim that the story attempts "to embody a turn-of-the-century American society in which ... a personal, original, and undetermined, freely-willing selfhood could scarcely be found."

Style

Verbal Irony

Commonly and simply referred to as "irony," verbal or rhetorical irony hinges on discrepancies between reality and the words a writer or speaker uses to represent reality. A fictional character may or may not be aware of the contradictions, but the meaning of the text often depends on the reader recognizing them. According to the *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, "Irony is commonly employed as a 'wink' that the listener or reader is expected to notice so that he or she may be 'in on the secret.'" If such effects are consistent throughout the text, *ironic tone* characterizes the narrator or speaker's voice. *Satire* frequently uses irony, which produces, but is not limited to, comic effect.

In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," the exaggerated descriptions of the town as "most honest," "upright," and "unsmirched" identify the ironic tone of the narrator's voice, especially as the reader recognizes that this model of virtue has deeply offended a stranger and makes Mary feel threatened by burglars. The story contains numerous contradictions between the reality of Hadleyburg and its reputation for virtue. Early examples include Edward's quiet history of lying, Mary's generally disdainful opinion of the neighbors, and their conjecture that only Goodson, born and raised outside of Hadleyburg, could have been generous enough to give a stranger twenty dollars.

The narrator uses a neutral journalistic tone to report the ridiculous, self-serving and hypocritical behavior of the townsfolk. His tone produces a comic effect that emphasizes the contradiction between the town's reputation and reality. For instance, when Edward struggles to remember his "great service" to Goodson, the narrator reports: "Thereafter during a stretch of two exhausting hours [Edward] was busy saving Goodson's life." Highlighting the visions of rampant greed that consumed Hadleyburg after the nineteen residents received their letters from Stephenson, the narrator tells how each wife "put in the night spending the money ... an average of seven thousand dollars each ... "

Among the residents of Hadleyburg, only Jack Halliday notices of the town's hypocrisy and assumes the ironic tone of the narrator. He observes the town's fluctuating moods as they brood over the gold sack, seeing how they take pleasure in others' misfortunes, such as the injury of a neighbor or the death of a mother-in-law. Halliday guides the reader through the verbal irony of the text, particularly by his ability to see through hypocrisy and to tell the difference between the town's reputation and its reality.

Dramatic Irony

A type of *situational irony,* dramatic irony registers differences between what the characters know and what the reader knows as well as differing levels of information available to characters at any give point in a story. Like verbal irony, the discrepancy

produces a comic effect. Verbal and dramatic irony often combine forces to heighten the writer's intent. For instance, partially informed characters make remarks unaware of the full meaning those words convey.

Like the verbal irony of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," dramatic irony underscores the hypocrisy of the town. Numerous plot devices feature dramatic irony, including the nineteen letters from Stephenson, the "favor" Burgess erroneously grants Edward by not naming him, and the applause showered upon the guilty Richardses for their honesty. Throughout the various twists and turns of the plot, the omniscient narrator keeps the reader informed of the "real" situation in Hadleyburg by means of dramatic irony.

Dramatic irony among the characters allows Burgess to exact his own subtle revenge on the townsfolk. Although he seemingly expresses no anger or bitterness about his scandalous past, Burgess avenges himself during the town meeting and only he and the reader is privy. Knowing beforehand that he has claims from nineteen prominent residents of Hadleyburg, he announces them one by one and feigns surprise at each name. Burgess purposely pauses between each name to give them the ignominy due them. Perhaps Burgess relishes the opportunity to humiliate the people that turned against him. In addition, Burgess's advance knowledge about who submitted claims infuses verbal irony into his opening speech at the meeting, "Today your purity is beyond reproach ... there is not a person in your community who could be beguiled to touch a penny not his own." Both Burgess and the reader can recognize the ironic tone of his hyperbolic praise.

Parable

The literary form of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" closely resembles the parable. According to the *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms,* a parable is "a short, realistic, and illustrative story intended to teach a moral or religious lesson." A parable is a specific type of allegory. Whereas allegories convey multiple meaning on various levels-for instance, the obvious, surface tale means one thing but a deeper, symbolic story means something else-parables tell realistic stories in response to particular situations.

On its surface, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" tells a story about the demoralizing forces at work in an ordinary American town at the turn of the century. The motivations and desires of the townsfolk typify those of an average American community. The townsfolk's tendency to deceive, be greedy, and serve self-interests suggest parallels to the general behavior of American society, specifically to the character of American society in the 1890s. In "The Lie That I Am I: Paradoxes of Identity in Mark Twain's 'Hadleyburg,'" Briden and Prescott discuss the opposing aims of individualism and communal cooperation that inform the Puritan ethic which helped to shape the American society. In his story, Twain dramatized the disastrous consequence of this struggle.

Critics also interpret "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" in terms of the Eden myth, in which Hadleyburg represents Eden. Edward and Mary become Adam and Eve figures, the offended stranger becomes the snake or Satan, and Goodson representing God. In "The Role of Satan in 'The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" Rule describes Hadleyburg as an "ironic Eden"—a paradise already "fallen" into sin—which an ironic Satan visits in order to restore rather than condemn. Rule asserts that American society became "diseased by hypocrisy and money-lust," similar to immoral Babylon rather than wholesome New Canaan, the model for America's early settlers. Hadleyburg symbolizes the status of humankind after the fall into sin.

Historical Context

"The Gilded Age"

In Twain's lifetime, the America experienced astounding industrial progress and unprecedented social ills. Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, and other so-called "robber barons" made fortunes developing the American steel, railroad, and oil industries. While they strengthened America's industrial power and ushered the nation into the modern world, they grew their monopolies at the expense of smaller companies and the interests of ordinary workers by successfully influencing the President and Congress.

Although a few prospered enormously, average Americans paid a price for progress. America's agricultural economy gradually shifted toward industry, as unemployed farmers began migrating to the cities. The modern city emerged in this era, along with a host of urban ills: overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions that bred disease, and poverty. Most laborers worked at factories for low wages and usually in dangerous conditions. Unable to live on their parents' meager incomes, children also went to work at factories.

Twain coined the phrase "The Gilded Age" to describe the period of American history from the 1860s through the 1890s. This phrase resonates with the image of the gilt slugs in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." Although Twain did not explicitly address specific social and political problems in his story, he dramatized the theme expressed by the adage "All that glitters is not gold." The people of Hadleyburg learn the consequences of pursuing illusions. As the nineteen claimants demonstrate, it often leads to ruin. Their self-imposed humiliation over a worthless sack of gilt lead serves to warn a nation obsessed with material wealth and "progress" of the human cost involved.

The Birth of a Nation

With the consolidation of railroads and advances in communication America began to consider itself a true nation. In 1869 the first transcontinental railroad was completed, and by 1886 all railroads adopted a standard gauge. Switchovers between regional lines became seamless, which simplified the movement of freight and passengers across the country. In 1844 Samuel Morse invented the telegraph, and in 1876 Alexander Graham invented the "speaking telegraph," or the telephone. The advent of new technology in transportation and communi cation helped break down regional differences, which created a sense of community and a national identity among people living in the United States.

Critics identify Hadleyburg as a microcosm of America society, representing both the strengths and weaknesses of the nation. Hadleyburg also benefits from contemporary developments in print technology. By advertising the stranger's moneybag in the

newspaper, word spread across the country. The mass production of the printed word let Hadleyburg brag about its honesty on a national scale. The narrator claims that "the name of Hadleyburg the Incorruptible was on every lip in America, from Montreal to the Gulf, from the glaciers of Alaska to the orange-groves of Florida; and millions and millions of people were discussing the stranger and his money-sack." Through the printed word the mutual interests of a community extend beyond the boundaries of a single locale, which eventually shaped a national American identity in the minds of Twain and his contemporaries.

However, rapid communication also comes with drawbacks. A small town communicates not only its successes to the world via newspapers and telephone lines but its failures as well. Critics point out the oppressive nature of community in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," noting the disastrous effects of "slavish" attention to public opinion. In this way, Hadleyburg embodies the inherent dangers of conforming to preconceived notions of national identity.

Critical Overview

"The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" received mixed reviews when it first appeared in *Harper's Monthly* and later in the collection *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Sketches.* Despite the range of critical estimations of the story, the magazine version of the story enjoyed a wide audience and earned Twain about $2000. Many commentators detected a movement away from Twain's trademark humor and light-hearted satire toward a moralizing didactic tone. A reviewer for *Living Age* states: "Mark Twain at his best is as good in his own line as any living writer of English prose ... The snag on which he now seems most apt to run his vessel is that of edification. He is too fond of being didactic, or pointing morals, of drawing lessons, of teaching the old world how to conduct its affairs." This reviewer longs for the "gleams of the old humor" and "outbursts of the old daring" that marks Twain's previous literary efforts and recommends that Twain return to his successful style of "gleaming humor," "daring exaggeration," and "vivid and 'full-steam ahead' narration." On the other hand, William Archer of the *Critic* defended the moralistic tone of his story: "Perhaps you wonder to find Mark Twain among the moralists at all? If so, you have read his previous books to little purpose. They are full of ethical suggestion." Archer praised "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" for delivering a "sermon that sticks." Citing Twain's story as a perfect parable, Archer explained that the appeal of a parable lies in its dramatic content, illustrating a lesson in an enjoyable fashion.

Scholars usually situate "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" within the context of Twain's other so-called "serious fiction." Late in his life, Twain addressed various philosophical and political issues in both his essays and fiction. His contemporaries often balked at these forays into the sober side of literature. "Mark Twain, ardent patriot as he is, has an inability to put himself in the situation of a foreigner or of one who lived in another generation than the present," remarked the reviewer for *Living Age*. "He is conspicuously defective in the historic sense; and one who is defective in the historic sense had best keep his views on politics to himself." Still, Twain himself viewed humor as more than mere entertainment. In *Mark Twain: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1997) Tom Quirk quotes Twain as saying, "Humor must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would last forever."

Numerous critics have admired the literary structure of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" for its "economy" and "efficiency." Archer claimed, "A more tight-packed piece of narrative art it would be hard to conceive." Quirk remarked, "The prose is wonderfully cadenced, but it is stripped for action and running headlong toward some undisclosed end." Commentators usually appreciate the town hall meeting as "pure dramatic comedy." According to Quirk, Twain "approached the Hadleyburg story sometimes with the instincts of a dramatist and sometimes with the calculated intellectual interests of a philosopher, and throughout with the spontaneous trust that the tale would tell itself."

In the latter half of the twentieth century, many critics approach "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" in terms of the ethical implications of the story, debating whether

Twain advocated a deterministic philosophy, a moralistic code, or some combination of both. Some critics find that "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" expresses the inherent sinfulness of human nature, while others emphasize that moralistic impulses inform the story, highlighting the freedom of choice available to the characters as well as the ethical implications raised by the ironic narrator. However, commentators on both sides puzzle over the basic contradictions of these philosophies. Quirk considers Twain's story as an "absurdist's nihilistic parable, full of misfired messages, dramatizing the impossibility of accurate understanding and communication." Quirk adds that the only philosophical consistency in this story is its inconsistency, a symptom of the instability of human nature that Twain so vividly captured. Some critics interpret "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as an amalgam of literary motives and styles that define Twain as a mature writer. In *The Authentic Mark Twain* (1984) Everett Emerson analyzes the story as an expression of "inconsistent" determinism that presupposes limited freedom of choice. Though things are indeed "ordered," as Edward Richards recognizes, the presence of freedom of choice allows for flexibility in the cosmic order. Other critics discuss "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as a uniquely American story, dramatizing the essential conflict between individualism and communal cooperation that has molded the American character since Puritan times. The story has also been recognized for its critique of materialism.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Yoonmee Chang is a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation focuses on class and labor issues in Asian American literature. In the following essay, she discusses Mark Twain's "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as an exploration of nation formation and a critique of the attendant ills generated by a strong sense of "community."

America celebrated the 400th anniversary of its discovery in 1893 with the lavish Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Exposition was part of a nascent tradition, starting with London's Crystal Palace in 1851, which grandly boasted its nation's culture, science and industry to itself and the world. Central to the exposition was the concept of the "nation," that there was a unified cultural, political and geographical entity to speak of. The idea of the "nation" is a powerful ideology, uniting diverse race and class groups along common, abstract goals and moral tenets. History has demonstrated that goals and tenets that come be recognized as "national" or as comprising "nationalism" are so sacred that citizens are willing to die for them. Historians and literary critics have noted that it is often when the internal cohesion of "nations" are threatened, that such grandiose productions like the Columbian Exposition appear. Large-scale, ideological projects like this, at best, hope to reunify fragmenting parts and, at worst, manufacture an artificial, public perception of national unity.

Late nineteenth century America, in which Mark Twain wrote "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899), was just such a fragmented era. It was a period where America-as-nation began to be concretely imagined, as advances in transportation and communication linked distant regions. But it was also a time when that unity was thrown into question as the common American citizen realized that her low-paid, back-breaking work was mainly contributing to the outlandish wealth of a few powerful men. For the average laborer, her "nationalist" dedication to building up American industry reaped paltry personal rewards. Mark Twain was no stranger to the paradoxes of contemporary society. He is credited with coining the phrase, "The Gilded Age" to describe a time (1860s to 1890s) when America's sparkling and powerful industrial facade thinly concealed a phalanx of social and political ills. In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," he provides a localized account of the process of American nation-building and then moves on to critique the Hadleyburgians as examples of blind and mechanistic adherents of potentially invidious communal ideologies like "nation." With Samuel Morse's invention of the telegraph, Alexander Graham Bell's creation of the telephone, and the consolidation of the regional railroad lines, America ceased to be a series of loosely linked, disparate geographical regions. Within minutes an order for coal or meat products, transported in recently invented refrigerated train cars, could be placed across North America. For a reasonable price an individual could travel by rail anywhere across the continent in the comfort of a Pullman, or sleeping train car, invented by George Pullman in 1864. Geographical distances were shrinking much in the same way as advanced technology today has fashioned the world into a "global village." What nineteenth-century residents of the United States were experiencing was the birth of America as a nation.

Advances in print technology allow the Hadleyburgians to understand themselves as both a local community and part of a larger "nation" comprised of a cluster of such communities. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983) argues that it is precisely the development of printcapitalism that caused individuals to perceive themselves as part of a community. In particular, the form of the newspaper, widely circulated, rapidly consumed, and reporting both local and "national" events in the vernacular, assumes that its readers are part of a larger group who read and care about the same news. This audience comprises the basic unit of community. In addition, by giving them a glimpse of the events in other regions, for instance in "national" sections of local editions, newspapers link their readers' and their particular community to a constellation of other communities and audiences. Through the narrative created by the newspaper, these various communities perceive themselves as living life simultaneously, for instance, while Hadleyburgians are announcing the birth of a baby, the Brixtonites may be celebrating the election of a new mayor. The aggregate of these linked, simultaneously living communities forms a "nation." Importantly, there are other bonds through which communities can be linked, based on shared geography, history, language, and cultural and religious practices; Hadleyburg understands itself to be similar to Brixton but not to Caracas.

Anderson's analysis of the relationship between print-capitalism and community formation is played out in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." The printed word unites the Hadleyburgians in a community of that both celebrates and despises itself. The nineteen claimants share such similar-if not identical-responses to the stranger's first note, and later Stephenson's secretbearing letters, that they could be said to be acting as a collective whole, a community. Each husband fabricates a dubious account of the "great service" bestowed on Goodson and each wife fantasizes about holding fancy parties. In an earlier stage when only the Coxes and Richardses knew about the sack, Twain described their actions and conversations as "seeming plagiarisms of each other." To be sure, Hadleyburg had been behaving as a community even before the arrival of the sack and the notes, as evidenced by their group condemnation of Goodson and Burgess.

As a unified, local community, the Hadleyburgians also understand themselves as connected to the larger "national" body. Edward Richards's immediate reaction to the stranger's note is to print it in the newspaper, gleefully anticipating the "noise it will make" in "mak[ing] all the other towns jealous" that Hadleyburg was entrusted with such a sum of money. The unnamed newspaper has quite a far-reach, exaggeratedly so. By "breakfasttime next morning the name of Hadleyburg the Incorruptible was on every lip in America, from Montreal to the Gulf, from the glaciers of Alaska to the orange-groves of Florida; and millions and millions of people were discussing the stranger and his money-sack." As Anderson demonstrates, communities understand themselves as discrete and unique but simultaneously linked to similar groups who have assumed interests in their news, "national" news as it were. The stranger's note printed in the newspaper serves just this purpose. Proud of its unity by virtue of its unassailable honesty, Hadleyburg differentiates itself as a unique and unified community while linking itself to related communities under the rubric of the "nation." Significantly, as widespread as Hadleyburg's news is, it stops at the boundaries of the United States as Twain's

contemporaries understood it. By circumscribing the news within the four "corners" of Montreal, Alaska, Mexico and Florida, Twain maps out the borders of what he considers to be the American nation.

The printed word also unites Hadleyburg in contempt. As Burgess reveals that there is more than one note claiming ownership of the sack, the community roars in ridicule. The consensus of derision builds as Burgess reads the nineteen names one by one. In "The Lie that I am I: Paradoxes of Identity in Mark Twain's 'Hadleyburg,'" Earl Briden and Mary Prescott interpret the Hadleyburgians as unthinking duplicates who slavishly serve public opinion. The God that they worship is "everybody." In this kind of community, individualized selfhood is illusory and each citizen finds him and herself blindly performing "repetitive, automatic, duplicated" actions that deterministically push them forward to a predictably ignoble end. Even their nationally acclaimed honesty is merely a means to "communal self-approval" as the town is "motivated to perpetuate not the empirical reality [of its honesty] but the reputation for it."

The town hall scene in Part 3 offers a clear demonstration of "herd mentality." Briden and Prescott discuss the robotic Hadleyburgians who are seduced or intimidated by it- better to be part of the jeering mob than its victim. The undifferentiated crowd is roused by the least provocation, capriciously alternating between praise and contempt (for instance in the case of Wilson). Except for the nineteen claimants, the citizens do not have individual names but are generically labeled, for instance "the hatter" or "the tanner." Even the nineteen claimants- the Billson, Wilson, Wilcox, Cox-seem to be duplicates of each other as Briden and Prescott point out. In other words, the underbelly of Hadleyburgian unity is a degenerate and even malicious herd mentality that punishes those, like Goodson and Burgess, who refuse to serve it. The result is a stupefied group intellect, or lack of it, that seeks to homogenize the opinions and desires of its members.

This dangerous homogenizing power of community was a prevalent problem in Twain's America. As the nation grew larger and more diverse, encompassing individuals of different ethnic backgrounds and economic classes who emigrated from various countries, the social and political unification of its citizens became problematic. Lisa Lowe writes in *Immigrant Acts* (1996) that recruiting diverse citizens into a generic course of "nationalism" is a powerful ideological technique. For instance, at the turn of the nineteenth century, immigration increased at a dramatic rate. These new Americans were prime targets for exploitation by big business. With limited networks and language abilities, and sometimes a fear of being returned to their country of origin, many immigrants accepted substandard wages and conditions. They frequently lived on factory premises in unsanitary, overcrowded hovels provided by the employer who profited enormously from his teams of pennies-per-hour workers. Why did American workers tolerate this treatment?

These new Americans were often seduced by the "American dream," the still ubiquitous myth that if one only works hard, one will no doubt achieve prosperity. This myth was supported by the popular Horatio Algers dime novels of the day and widely told rags-to-riches stories of industrial magnates like Andrew Carnegie. This myth of the American dream is an ideology, that is, a powerful abstract concept that aligns diverse individuals

towards a common goal for the benefit of the powerful few. Those in power can be the military, the national government, capitalist leaders or a cooperation of several such groups. The "American dream" is one of the sacred tenets of this nation and its ideological power is evident in its ability to convince individuals to accept debased qualities of life, like the immigrant workers discussed above. Nationalistic behavior in this case is believing in the fictive American dream, continuing to work for pennies in the hopes of achieving it, and disseminating this ideology to other (would-be) Americans. The spread and success of this ideology perpetuates a situation where individuals bewilderingly subjugate themselves to exploitation for the sake of a nebulous idea of "nation."

The above example provides a historical illustration of the Hadleyburgians unquestioning and slavish adherence to communal ideals. This kind of rigid group mentality defuses rebellion either by recruiting resisters for an abstract, and perhaps empty, common goal or punishing them severely for their insurgence, using images of past rebels, like Goodson and Burgess, to intimidate them. In this way, a community, and in the larger sense a nation, assumes the power to homogenize minds and inhibit individual thought. Lowe writes, "The national institutionalization of unity becomes the measure of the nation's condition of heterogeneity." In other words, when a nation "threatens" to become diverse and pluralistic, it tends to disseminate ideas and even policies of sweeping and unifying nationalism in order to stanch such diversification. Hadleyburg as a microcosm of America represents this kind of homogenizing process. In light of the town hall proceedings, the town motto probably should read: "Agree with the group or be destroyed by it." The Richardses are well versed in this doctrine, as shown by their inability to disabuse the crowd of its error when it congratulates them for being the only "clean" ones left. The Richardses choose to waste away and die rather than go against the community's opinion.

The town hall scene serves as an ever-relevant warning against degenerate, malicious, but seductive mob mentality. Despite the so-called "redemption" of the town at the end of the story, at least nineteen lives are destroyed by the consensus of the community. Perhaps the nineteen claimants "deserved" their fate, but the community also ruined Burgess and Goodson's lives simply because they went against the grain. Hadleyburg, as both microcosm and part of the nation, represents the dangerous effects of cultural homogenization and blind allegiance to communal values.

Source: Yoonmee Chang, for *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Scherting asserts that Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" served as inspiration for Twain.

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world; we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial." These wellknown lines from Milton's *Areopagitica* (1643) may have provided Mark Twain with the thematic element for his story "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899). But the structural similarities between Twain's story and Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) are close enough to suggest that Poe's work was a much stronger and more immediate influence.

In the first place, both tales concern men seeking revenge for some unspecified insult. Poe's narrator, Montresor, explains his motive: "The thou sand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge." In Twain's version, the corruptor (known only as Stephenson) relates the cause of his grievance as follows: "I passed through [Hadleyburg] at a certain time, and received a deep offense which I had not earned."

Second, both of these men are willing to defer vengeance until they can find a suitable means of exacting it—one which will cause the offending victims to suffer and, at the same time, leave them aware of the agent of their suffering. "*At length* I would be avenged," says Montresor, "this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong." Likewise, in Twain's story we learn that Hadleyburg's nemesis has nursed his grudge for a long time before he finally devised a suitable plan of action: "All through his wanderings during a whole year he kept his injury in mind, and gave all his leisure moments to trying to invent a compensating satisfaction for it." And in his final letter to the citizens of Hadleyburg, the "corruptor" expressed a criterion for revenge much like Montresor's: "Any other man would have been content to kill one or two of you and call it square, but to me that would have been inadequate; for the dead do not suffer."

Third, in exacting revenge both Montresor and Stephenson use identical means to achieve their ends: they exploit human vanity by challenging the reputation of their victims. Montressor appeals to Fortunato's ego to gull him into the wine cellar: "He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine." In Twain's story, we also find that the avenger exploits the vanity of the citizens of Hadleyburg to execute his plan. "You were easy game," Stephenson gloats, "you had an old and lofty reputation for honesty, and naturally you were proud of it—." Moreover, the characters in the two

stories lure their victims into uncompromising situations with tempting bait—in Poe's, it is a cask of rare wine; in Twain's, a stack of gold bars. Both avengers reveal themselves when they have finally tricked their victims into situations from which they cannot extract themselves. Fortunato is chained to a wall, and the citizens of Hadleyburg are committed to conflicting claims for the gold bars which are in reality gilded lead.

Finally, in addition to these parallel patterns in the plots of the two stories, there is also a textual similarity to indicate that Poe's story influenced Twain's. Mottoes are used to complement the themes of both stories. Montresor's coat of arms is inscribed *"Nemo me impune lacessit"* (No one attacks me with impunity,) and Hadleyburg's official town seal contains the words "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION." (The *not* was deleted after the "corruptor" made his point).

The two stories were written from different points of view and to create different literary effects; however, these parallels still suggest that Twain had read Poe's work and that the story served in a sense as a prototype for "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." While writing, Twain was probably not even conscious that he was incorporating important elements of Poe's tale into his own; nevertheless, these elements are there and stand as another example of Poe's seminal influence on later authors. Much to his embarrassment, Twain himself was made aware of the subtle manner in which previous reading often determines the pattern of an author's current writing project. In his *Autobiography,* he related a case in point concerning his unconscious plagiarism of the dedication in a volume of Oliver Wendell Holmes's poems. Twain's remarks on the matter provide a fitting conclusion for this paper. Twain observed....

that all our phrasings are spiritualized shadows cast multitudinously from our readings; that no happy phrase of ours is ever quite original with us; there is nothing of our own in it except some slight change born of our temperament, character, environment, teachings and associations; that this slight change differentiates it from another man's manner of saying it, stamps it with our special style and makes it our own for the time being; all the rest of it being old, moldy, antique and smelling of the breath of a thou sand generations of them that have passed it over their teeth before!

Source: Jack Scherting, "Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado': A Source for Twain's 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" in *The Mark Twain Journal,* Vol. XVI, No. 2, Summer, 1972, pp. 18-19.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Nebeker extends critic Henry B. Rule's discussion of the role of Satan in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," arguing against Rule's assertion that the "man" of the title refers to Satan.

Regarding Professor Henry B. Rule's article "The Role of Satan in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg"' (*Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 6, Fall, 1969), I suggest that his thesis can be strengthened and extended by taking a second look at the identity of the Corrupter. The assumption prevails that the Man of the title is naturally the Stranger alias Stephenson, or by extension, as Mr. Rule so carefully develops, Satan. However, in contradiction, and completely supported by the text of the story, I believe that the reference is not to Satan but to another who is fully revealed as the story unfolds. This premise takes Mr. Rule's explication one step further, both in his treatment of Twain's "determination to rehabilitate Satan's character" and in his belief that "man is nothing more than a machine that responds ... to outside stimuli." It further adds dimension to his discussion of the Eden myth.

To absolve Satan of the guilt of being the Corrupter and thus participate in rehabilitating his reputation, we must note the careful detail by which Twain indicates the initial moral bankruptcy of Hadleyburg. Mary, left with the gold, flies to lock the door, to pull the window-shades and then stands listening for burglars, in this most honest of towns. Later, she tells her husband "it is fast getting along toward burglar-time." Then successively we learn that Edward is envious and covetous, that Mary cannot conceive of her husband having done a generous deed, that Edward has permitted Reverend Burgess to bear the blame for a crime he did not commit. We hear Mary condone her husband's act; we note her snobbery when she says of Burgess," ... he is always trying to be friendly with us, as little encouragement as we give him.... I wish he wouldn't persist in liking us so.... " And in this same conversation, we see the mean spirits of the Wilsons and the Wilcoxes and the Harknesses, as we will later see the same faults in the other "castebrothers."

Furthermore, even Jack Halliday, the "natural" man, is not generous and joyous but mean and petty, a man who rejoices in his townspeople's unhappiness and who becomes "dissatisfied with life" when they appear happy again. And Barclay Goodson, the "one good generous soul in this village" emerges even more tarnished. He calls the people, "to the day of his death," "... honest, narrow, self-righteous, and stingy." He tells them to "go to hell." He is the "best-hated man," a "soured bachelor" and a "frank despiser of the human species" until "... Heaven took Goodson."

Certainly, in view of these details, Satan can be, in no real sense, the Corrupter. He can be that only in a secondary way of offering the catalyst of gold, which will, ironically, result in regeneration rather than the destruction that has been his goal.

Now at this point I begin to differ with Mr. Rule. Satan is, indeed, "the tempter who speeds Hadleyburg to its fall by the lure of gold," but he is not "the ruler of this world."

He, himself, has no free agency; he cannot determine the outcome of his scheming. This bitter, brooding, evil stranger, motivated by his desire for vengeance, can act only as a force for moral regeneration. He is as bound by his nature ("made as I am," he says) as are any of his victims. Twain could not have pled Satan's case more powerfully than he does in this story where the Great Gambler, already flung from Heaven by a vengeful God, finds himself the tool of a "benevolent" Providence. As Mary so vehemently exclaims, "Ordered! Oh everything's *ordered*.... " or as Edward sighs, "It—well, it was ordered. *All* things are." And we, the readers, are able to see clearly that this applies even to Satan himself. Satan is not the Great Corrupter; he is merely a pawn.

What, then, does all this presage? How are we to identify the Corrupter, remain true to the text, and strengthen and extend Mr. Rule's thesis? Simply by seeing all of the factors already developed herein in terms of a Calvinist ethos which Twain both knew and detested. Generally stated, that interpretation of God and man goes something like this: The Great Creator, offended (as was the Stranger) by his creations, Adam and Eve, seeks revenge (as does the Stranger) and fully effects it (as the Stranger cannot) by driving these, his children, from Eden, condemning them to a corrupt, mortal life. Henceforward, according to Calvinist doctrine, fallen man must dwell in absolute depravity, victim of his own evil nature, unable to save himself, predestined to eternal hell-fire, unless he is *divinely elected,* by Providence through Grace, for salvation—a blessing reserved for a select few. Hence man, in his very origin is corrupt, and God, in condemning man to his fallen nature has become the Great Corrupter.

Now to substantiate my thesis contextually. The Richards—representative of all their "castebrothers"— are the general run of mankind. Carnal, weak, tempted, they are victims of their corrupt human nature. Barclay Goodson (God's Son), appointed as an instrument for their redemption, is a narrow, carping, condemning misanthrope (created in His Father's image?) who has in him no power unto redemption and lies "in his grave.... " Thus, if man ever had a chance, he muffed it by offending his Saviour who seems, in Twain's hands, far more mortal than heavenly. God has further betrayed his mortal creatures by having them taught to pray from their birth, "Lead us not into temptation," thus assuring their destruction when temptation does occur.

Satan, then, is left apparently unchecked in his efforts to demoralize man. But the Great Corrupter corrupts even this Master of Evil, perverting his destructive plans to a regenerative force—but in dreadful form. For Satan, feeling most un-Satanlike respect for the "virtue" of the Richards, acts to reward the old couple, with money, of course, bringing them to their death from guilt and despair. Thus the human, weak, but essentially guiltless man and his wife are completely destroyed, as they further injure Burgess, at once the most innocent and the most wronged.

The horror deepens when we realize that "Dr." Clay Harkness, "one of the two very rich men" actually profits from the debacle. Although he has been one of the nineteen, by fortuitous circumstances (Grace and Providence), he takes advantage of the whole hoax and, in the words of Twain, "Harkness' election was a walk-over." Twain's malicious satire on the Calvinist doctrine of salvation of the "divinely elected," without reference to merit, must be obvious.

Now, the explanation of America as Fallen Eden is inescapable. For man, by nature corrupt, can never, even in a new world, resist temptation— especially in the form of gold or materialism. So the noble experiment is doomed from the outset and man and Eden fall, victims of the Great Corrupter.

Source: Helen E. Nebeker, "The Great Corrupter or Satan Rehabilitated," in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. VIII, No. 4, Fall, 1971, pp. 635-37.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Rule argues that "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" is an Edenic analogy, casting Satan in the role of the "man" of the title of the story.

"I have always felt friendly toward Satan," Twain wrote in his *Autobiography.* "Of course that is ancestral; it must be in the blood, for I could not have originated it." Perhaps it was "ancestral," for Twain described in another passage of his *Autobiography* his mother's sympathy for Satan. He wasn't "treated fairly," she claimed. After all, he was just a sinner, like the rest of us. Sinful man cannot save himself by his own efforts; his hope lies in "the mighty help of pathetic, appealing, imploring prayers that go up daily out of all the Churches in Christendom and out of myriads upon myriads of pitying hearts. But," she asked, "who prays for Satan?" It is doubtful that Jane Clemens caused many of her fellow Presbyterians to relent in their hardened attitudes toward Satan. But her son, Sam, apparently heard her and decided to do something about this injustice. In his article "Is Shakespeare Dead?" Twain said that when he was seven years old he asked his Sunday-school teacher, Mr. Barclay, a stone-mason, to tell him about Satan. Mr. Barclay was willing to set forth the five or six facts concerning Satan's history, "but he stopped there; he wouldn't allow any discussion of them." Upon hearing that Sam was thinking about a biography of Satan, Mr. Barclay was "shocked" and made the boy stop writing. Mr. Barclay's victory was tempo rary, however, for Twain never relinquished his determination to become Satan's biographer. Among his writings in which Satan plays the lead role are "Letters to Satan," "Sold to Satan," "A Humane Word for Satan," "Letters from Earth," "That Day in Eden," and the two major works of his old age— "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" and *The Mysterious Stranger*.

Twain's interest in Satan bore its most remarkable fruit in the year 1898. In that year he avowed his determination to rehabilitate Satan's character, began the first version of *The Mysterious Stranger,* and finished "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg." His resolution to rescue Satan from centuries of slander was candidly expressed in his article "Concerning the Jews." In this article Twain declared that he had "no prejudice" against Satan and admitted that he even leaned "a little his way, on account of his not having a fair show": "All religions issue bibles against him, and say the most injurious things about him, but we never hear *his* side. We have none but the evidence for the prosecution, and yet we have rendered the verdict.... As soon as I can get at the facts I will undertake his rehabilitation myself, if I can find an unpolitic publisher." Acting upon his determination to restore Satan's character, Twain jotted in his notebook the plot outline for the first version of *The Mysterious Stranger:* "Story of little Satan Jr. who came to Hannibal, went to school, was popular and greatly liked by those who knew his secret. The others were jealous and the girls didn't like him because he smelled of brimstone. He was always doing miracles—his pals knew they were miracles. The others thought they were mysteries." The final version of *The Mysterious Stranger* was laid in a sixteenth-century Austrian village rather than in the Hannibal of Twain's youth. But for his best Satan, story. "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg," Twain *did* return to the scene of his earlier masterpieces-the small village in the American hinterland—only

this time the innocent vision of boyhood is supplanted (there are no children in "Hadleyburg") by the disillusioned gaze of adulthood.

A good deal of critical attention has focused on the ethical and philosophical import of "Hadleyburg," but little on its allegorical ingenuity, and to miss this aspect of the story is to miss much of its satirical and moral force. The purpose of this essay is to examine "Hadleyburg" as another example of the Eden myth that, as R. W. B. Lewis in his *The American Adam* has demonstrated, is so prominent in the American literary tradition. When one recognizes that "the mysterious stranger" in the story is Satan, then Hadleyburg becomes an ironic Eden that is diseased by hypocrisy and money- lust—an Eden that is symbolic of the fallen hopes of the American forefathers for a new paradise on Earth where mankind could begin afresh in peace and brotherhood and Godliness. In Twain's treatment of the Eden myth, Satan plays the role of savior rather than corrupter. The Eden of Hadleyburg, microcosm of America, is already corrupted by greed and deceit before Satan arrives on the scene. Although his initial motivation may have been revenge, the result of Satan's machinations is to lead Hadleyburg, perhaps without his volition, to some degree of moral reformation.

The character of the stranger in "Hadleyburg" is the same as that of Satan in the Bible and in folklore. His *strangeness,* his non-human difference, is suggested at the beginning of the story by a repetition of the word *stranger* . Hadleyburg "had the ill luck to offend a passing stranger." Mrs. Richards is "afraid of the mysterious big stranger" when he enters her house. He introduces himself to her with the words, "I am a stranger." (*ibid*.) In the letter that he leaves with her, he declares, "I am a foreigner," and his confession as to why ("made as I am") he cannot gain his revenge by merely killing the citizens of Hadleyburg also stresses his foreignness or strangeness. In the past, he was "a ruined gambler"—a reference to the greatest gamble of all time, Satan's foiled rebellion against Jehovah; he even thinks in gambling terms: "Yes, he saw my deuces *and* with a straight flush, and by rights the pot is his." Now, his home is in Mexico, land of fiery heat, and he is several times associated with hell-fire. When he arrived at his plan to corrupt Hadleyburg, his whole head was "lit up with an evil joy"; and the guilty Richards remarks upon receiving a note from him, "It seems written with fire—it burns so." Like the Satan in the Book of Job, he is a wanderer ("all through his wanderings"). Like the Satan in Genesis, he is the master of disguises; the disguise that he chooses for his appearance at the town-hall meeting ("an impossible English earl") suggests Prince Satan's aristocratic lineage as does also the name Stephenson (Greek *stephanos,* a crown) that he signs to the letter addressed to the nineteen principal citizens of Hadleyburg.

His dominion over Hadleyburg (Hadesburg?) is Satanic in its method and extent. He is the trickster and schemer of Christian and biblical fame. This "bitter man and revengeful" spent "a whole year" laying his snare for the men of Hadleyburg. He is the father of lies who leads Richards to tell his first lie to his wife and who unmasks the lie that the whole town had been living. He is the tempter who speeds Hadleyburg to its fall by the lure of gold, for he knows that in Hadleyburg "the love of money is the root of all evil"; as he slyly tells the citizens at the town-hall meeting, "I have dealings with persons interested in numismatics all over the world." The ease with which he manipulates the

Hadleyburgians through their greed proves him to be "the ruler of this world." The town-hall meeting is "the synagogue of Satan" or the Devil's Mass of Christian folklore: "The house droned out the eight words in a massed and measured and musical deep volume of sound (with a daringly close resemblance to a well-known church chant)," ending with "a grand and agonized and imposing 'A-a-a-a-men!'" The pious folk of Hadleyburg have given themselves over to Satan and have become his "children."

The names of the other main characters suggest their symbolic roles in Twain's fable. Richard's name implies that he is a "son of riches" who yearns for the wealth of his master, Pinkerton the banker. His first words in the story disclose his envy of Pinkerton: "'I'm so tired—tired clear out; it is dreadful to be poor, and to make these dismal journeys at my time of life. Always at the grind, grind, on a salary—another man's slave, and he sitting at home in his slippers, rich and comfortable.'" Even his given name Edward (Anglo-Saxon *ead* riches and *weard* guardian = guardian of riches) suggests his social status as well as his occupation at the bank. On the other hand, Twain places the Reverend Mr. Burgess (historically, his name denotes a freeman of a borough who owed special duties to the king and had special privileges) somewhere in between the position of those within the boundaries of Hadleyburg society, like the Richardses, and a true outsider, like Jack Halliday. His speech at the town meeting shows that he believes in the shibboleths of Hadleyburg, and as a minister he had held in the past an important position in society. But the fact that he has been cast out of Hadleyburg society because of the accusation of some crime that he didn't commit allows him a certain freedom from the narrow code of Hadleyburg, and he is able to perform the virtuous and sacrificial act of perjuring himself in order to save the Richardses from disgrace. Jack Halliday's name connotes his freedom from the pressures of Hadleyburg's business community. He is the only man in town who maintains a "holiday" mood as he jokes and laughs at the principal citizens throughout their vacillations from "holy happiness" to sad and sick reverie. Apparently, he was born outside of Hadleyburg respectability. He is a kind of "natural" man or grown-up Huck Finn, this "loafing, good-natured, no-account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boy's friend, stray-dog's friend." It is ironic that these two outsiders—the ruined minister and the noaccount loafer—are chosen to be the leaders of the town-meeting, a tribute to their moral superiority.

The name of Goodson (God's son) reveals his role as Christ in the world of Hadleyburg. His alienation from society is due neither to force nor to birth, but to his own moral conviction. He is the most hated man in town, for he sees through its sanctimonious cant. But everyone knows privately that he is the "one good generous soul in this village", and Satan points out (while making a pun) that he was the only man in Hadleyburg who "would give away twenty dollars to a poor devil." If we keep in mind the significance of Goodson's name, then the attempt of Richards (the son of riches) to save the soul of Goodson (the son of God) becomes highly ironic. Goodson's moral force, mysterious origin, and spiritual destination are suggested when Satan admits that at first he was afraid that Goodson might mar his plan to corrupt Hadleyburg, for "he was neither born nor reared in Hadleyburg.... But heaven took Goodson" (*ibid*.). Goodson's propertyless state and the hatred of the village philistines for him are also in the Christ tradition, but his defiance and bitterness do not conform to the character of the meek and loving Christ in the Gospels. However "years and years ago" (as long ago

as 2,000 years?) he had been a man of love rather than hate. In his youth, Goodson had been in love with a girl named Nancy Hewitt, but "the match had been broken off; the girl died"; and Goodson became "a frank despiser of the human species." The etymology of the sweetheart's name—Nancy (diminutive-variant of Anna, from the Hebrew *hannah,* grace) Hewitt (diminutivevariant of Hugh, Teutonic for spirit) reveals the spiritual or heavenly quality of Goodson's love. Twain strongly suggests in the story that the broken engagement and the girl's death were due to the village gossip "that she carried a spoonful of negro blood in her veins" (*ibid*.). The love of Goodson for this racially mixed girl, therefore, recalls the love of "the heavenly bridegroom" for mankind in general, and the broken engagement and the death of the girl may represent Twain's despairing conviction that the love of Christ is doomed in the world of Hadleyburg. "God's son" has gone to heaven, and Satan has a clear field.

The true god of the Hadleyburgians is Mammon, one of Satan's chieftans, not the God of love to whom they pray in church. The piety of Mrs. Richards, who plays the role of Eve in Twain's allegory of the Fall, is completely ineffectual as protection against the golden temptation of Satan. When Satan knocks on her door, she is piously reading the *Missionary Herald,* but as soon as he leaves her alone with the gold-sack, her tranquility is shattered. At first she weakly struggles against its fatal attraction and mutters a few prayers, but she soon finds herself kneeling in worship at the golden altar of Satan: "She turned the light down low, and slipped stealthily over and kneeled down by the sack and felt of its ridgy sides with her hands, and fondled them lovingly; and there was a gloating light in her poor old eyes."

The picture of poor Mrs. Richards kneeling before the sack of gilded coins is a blistering satire on the place of wealth in the Protestant fundamentalism of the citizens of Hadleyburg. Twain depicts the gross adulteration of virtue by money, piety by wealth, in the minds of these pious folk with beautiful irony in their unconscious language. "What a fortune for the kind man who set his bread afloat upon the waters!" exclaims Mrs. Richards upon reading Satan's first letter. In his speech to his townspeople, Rev. Burgess unwittingly accentuates the relationship between piety and profit in the minds of the Hadleyburgians by his mixture of Christian and commercial terminology. The town's "reputation" for honesty, he declares, is "a treasure of priceless value," and he predicts that "under Providence its value will become inestimably enhanced." He then rises to a climax: "Today there is not a person who could be beguiled to touch a penny not his own—see to it that you abide in this grace." And the audience responds, "We will! We will!" The religious words *providence* and *grace* acquire a new ironic intensity when one recognizes that they refer to the guidance and inspiration, not of God, but of Satan. Satan is the ruler of Hadleyburg. The irony becomes even more sardonic when, in a parody of the Puritan doctrine of inherited sin, the minister urges his townspeople to transmit their reputation "to your children and to your children's children."

Fallen Hadleyburg is a microcosm of fallen America. Rather than the new Canaan, the Kingdom of God in the wilderness that the forefathers had envisioned, America had become the new Babylonia devoted to the golden altar of Mammon. "I am grateful to America for what I have received at her hands during my long stay under her flag." confesses Satan with a fine sense of irony. The scene at the beginning of the town-hall

meeting for Devil's mass) constitutes an acid satire on American greed. Flags—emblems of national honor and pride—are everywhere: "The platform at the end of the hall was backed by a showy draping of flags: at intervals along the walls were festoons of flags; the gallery fronts were clothed in flags; the supporting columns were swathed in flags; all of this," says Twain in what appears to be a pun, "was to impress the stranger [*i.e.,* Satan], for he would be there in considerable force, and in a large degree he would be connected with the press" (Twain's low opinion of newspapers is well known). At the center of this patriotic display sits the gold-sack "on a little table at the front of the platform where all the house could see it." The whole audience rivets its attention on it "with a burning interest, a mouth-watering interest, a wistful and pathetic interest ... tenderly, lovingly, proprietarily.... " The scene is a brilliant satire on national avarice; and what makes the satire even more effective is the revelation that the "gold" discs are lead covered with gilt—a perfect symbol for the falsity of what Twain called "the gilded age" and its pursuits.

The one thing in this ironic Eden of Hadleyburg that is more precious than gold is the town's "reputation" for honesty. The false and empty pride of Hadleyburg in its honesty represents the apple that Eve plucked— "the very apple of your eye", as Satan described it to the Hadleyburgians—and an ticipates its fall. Hadleyburg values its reputation for honesty mainly for business reasons: "the mere fact that a young man hailed from Hadleyburg was all the recommendation he needed when he went forth from his natal town to seek for responsible employment." The true substance of Hadleyburg's honesty is indicated by Mrs. Richard's words as soon as she realizes that she is alone with a sack of gold: "Mercy on us, and the door not locked!" Filled with anxiety, she flies about locking the door and pulling down window shades. It is their reputation for honesty that the Hadleyburgians treasure, not its reality. Some of the most cutting ironies in the story spring from the incongruity between private deed and public appearance. When Satan at the town-meeting speaks of the "invulnerable probity" of the Richardses, they "blush prettily; however," Twain adds sardonically, "it went for modesty, and did no harm." Any act is permissible as long as it is performed in the dark. "Oh, bless God, we are saved!" cries Mrs. Richards when Burgess fails to read their test-remark. Salvation for these pious people consists of keeping their sins hidden from public view. Edward Richards is so fearful of public opinion that he repents of his one act of virtue—his warning to Burgess of the town's plan to ride him on a rail. "Edward!" gasps his wife Mary. "If the town had found it out—" "Don't! It scares me yet to think it. I repented of it the minute it was done." Obviously, the apple (*i.e.,* Hadleyburg "honesty") in this Eden is ready to drop from the weight of its own corruption. Satan's purpose is to force the inhabitants to eat this bitter fruit of their hypocrisy.

To accomplish this aim, that master engineer, Satan, manipulates his weak and foolish Edenites with superhuman precision. The mechanical actions of the dog in the audience at the town-hall is an amusing image of the automatic reflexes of the Hadleyburgians to Satan's relentless stratagems: when the crowd rises to its feet, so does the dog; when the crowd roars, the dog barks "itself crazy." The Richardses constantly have the feeling that their actions are controlled by a force outside of themselves, but they are too weak to resist. "Do you think we are to blame, Edward—*much* to blame?" Mary asks. "We—we couldn't help it, Mary. It— well, it was ordered. *All* things are", Edward answers

truthfully enough, although he would have been shocked to know that his actions were "ordered" by Satan, not God. Man is nothing more than a machine that responds automatically according to outside stimuli—this is the philosophy of man described in Twain's "bible," *What is Man?* written the same year as "Hadleyburg," and in many respects an enlightening commentary on the short story. Satan has no need to perform crude miracles; all he has to do is to activate the human mechanism with the desire for wealth and the need for the approval of his fellows and set it on its track. Each human piston goes through its cycles with perfect timing. When Edward puts on his hat and leaves his house "without a word," he doesn't need to communicate his intentions to his wife: both have arrived at the same conclusion in silence. In the meantime, Cox, the newspaper editor, and his wife go through the same series as did the Richards: elation and pride, fidgety silence, unspoken agreement, and departure. Richards and Cox meet at the foot of the printing-office stairs; again there is no need for words; but Satan has timed their mechanical reflexes so precisely that they meet just two minutes too late to spoil his plan. Later, the rest of the nineteen principal citizens go through the same intricate series of maneuvers as does their "caste brother Richards." Each puppet has been cast in the same mold, and Satan knows exactly which lever to pull or button to push to accomplish his ends.

This picture of robot man is grim and pessimistic, but not without hope. In *What is Man?* Twain states that in man's "chameleonship" lies "his greatest good fortune." The human machine cannot change from within, but the influences that dominate it can be changed. The duty of government, therefore, should be to lay "traps for people. Traps baited with *Initiatory Impulses toward high ideals."* That is exactly what Satan does in "Hadleyburg": he traps his victims into reform. The lies of the Father of Lies are an agency of truth. He weaves a snare of lies about the Hadleyburgians to force them to recognize that they have been living a monstrous lie.

Immediately after Satan sets into motion his machinations, the moral reformation of the Richardses begins. His stratagems lead this pathetic, middle-aged Adam and Eve to know the truth about themselves. Mary, who subscribes to the *Missionary Herald*, is very soon convinced that charity does not begin at *her* home by the realization that her husband lacks the generosity to give "a stranger twenty dollars." They both become aware that the only person in the town capable of an act of such magnanimity was the hated outcast Goodson. Edward must admit to Mary that the town's hostility toward Burgess stems from an injustice and that he hasn't the courage to right the wrong. Stripped of illusions concerning themselves, they can see the town in its true light. "Edward, it is my belief that this town's honesty is as rotten as mine is; as rotten as yours is," Mary confesses. Treading the wellworn path of Puritan regeneration, the Richardses are led first to a perception of their own sinfulness and then to a public confession. Whether or not Edward dies in a state of grace, his death-bed confession does have three beneficial results: (*1*) it enables him to die under the illusion, at least, that he is "a man, and not a dog"—like the automatic dog in the town-hall audience; (*2*) it at last clears Burgess of the crime that the town had charged against him; and (*3*) it completes the destruction of the false pride of the town by revealing that its last respected important citizen had also sinned.

It is safe to conclude, therefore, that Satan is Hadleyburg's greatest benefactor. In addition to his arsenal of therapeutic lies, he has one other mighty weapon against humbuggery—laughter. When Satan traps the Hadleyburgians into facing the shattering discrepancy between their pious pretentions and their secret venality, they explode into roars of whole-hearted laughter that sweeps away their hypocrisy. The change of the motto of the town from "Lead us not into temptation" to "Lead us into temptation" proves that the experience has had a lasting effect. As Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger* points out: "... your race, in its poverty has unquestionably one really effective weapon—laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution— these can lift at a colossal humbug—push it a little—weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand." The pious citizens of the town are quite unaware of the ironic application of their chant as Satan leaves the town-hall: "You are f-a-r from being a b-a-a-d man—a-a-a-a-men!" Satan's original motive may have been revenge, but the result of his labors is to bring Hadleyburg to an understanding of its corruption so that it can reform. That he reveres virtue can be seen in his apology to Edward: "I honor you—and that is sincere, too."

Satan as man's benefactor is a fairly common idea in nineteenth-century literature. The cynical Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust,* of which Twain owned several translations, is clearly an unwitting servant of God; his duty is to stimulate man's discontent so that he will constantly strive for a higher ideal. Other books that he read—*The Gods* by Robert G. Ingersoll (who was one of Twain's heroes), and *La Sorciere* by Jules Michelet (which Twain probably read in preparation for his *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*) defend Satan and his devils as humane and civilizing forces in the world. Most likely, however, Twain's characterization is derived from the Bible, which he had memorized as a boy during many weary Sabbaths. Many Biblical passages depict Satan as a servant of God whose functions are to test man's faith, punish his wickedness, and purge his flesh "that his spirit may be saved." Perhaps Satan's major service to man is to chasten his pride. This is the role that he employs to bring about the fortunate fall of the Eden of Hadleyburg. Saint Paul himself was aware of Satan's usefulness as a means of humbling man's pride: "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated" (I Cor. 12:7). Possibly this and similar passages in the Bible, in addition to the encouragement of his kindhearted mother, inspired little Sam at the age of seven to rescue Satan from nineteen centuries of Christian defamation. "Hadleyburg" is the finest product of that long endeavor.

"Hadleyburg" is far superior to *The Mysterious Stranger,* the other major Satan story of Twain's old age. It is more subtle, more wittily devious in its presentation of Satan and mankind and their relation to one another. "Hadleyburg" achieves the unity of tone and aesthetic distance that satire and irony require, while *The Mysterious Stranger* violently alternates between the vulgar antics of a P. T. Barnum side show and the nakedly ferocious tirades of a world-hating, self-hating old man. Twain himself once described the reason for the artistic failure of *The Mysterious Stranger: "*... of course a man can't write successful satire except he be in a calm judicial good-humor ... in truth I don't ever seem to be in a good enough humor with anything to *satirize* it; no, I want to stand up

before it & curse it, & foam at the mouth, —or take a club & pound it to rags & pulp." For once, while writing "Hadleyburg," Twain found the emotional restraint to create a work of art. Standing alone among the products of his old age for the neatness and precision of its form and the richness of its allegorical ironies, "Hadleyburg" might be compared to two other American treatments of the Eden myth—Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Melville's *Billy Budd*.

Source: Henry B. Rule, "The Role of Satan in 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. VI, No. 5, Fall, 1969, pp. 619-29.

Topics for Further Study

As a critique of "community," "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" demonstrates the dangerous consequence of a "herd mentality." Do you agree or disagree with Twain's representation of American communities and the spirit of the nation as a whole, as oppressive and inhibitive to individualism? In your opinion, what is more important, individual expression or group cooperation? Use concrete examples from national or local history or current events to support your argument.

Discuss how today's society is influenced by communal values. Does society today encourage and tolerate individual views and opinions, or is it as rigid and close-minded as Twain's Hadleyburg? Perhaps it is a combination of these characteristics. Use quotes from newspaper and magazines where possible. You can also choose an excerpt from literature and analyze the community it describes. Use textual evidence.

Great detail is given about the opinions of the Hadleyburgians, what they believe and whom they hate. What are omitted are the viewpoints of the victims of this powerful public judgment. What are the so-called outcasts, Goodson and Burgess, thinking? Write a version of events from either or both of their points of view. You may choose to name the "sin" these men supposedly committed.

Hadleyburg can be understood as a microcosm of America and the story has been interpreted as warning adhering too closely to "nationalism." Using historical, literary, and other resources define "nationalism." Focusing on one or two events that are popularly understood as nationalistic, explain whether nationalism as you define it is a beneficial, productive force or a dangerous and oppressive one. You can contrast two events to discuss how nationalism changes according to the situation and need.

Earl F. Briden argues that interpretations of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" as a "fortunate fall" story are mistaken. He cites the various obstacles to such an interpretation. For instance, in his other writings, Twain recognizes the fortunate fall philosophy as an excuse for "sinning one's way to moral security." The story teaches commercial not moral lessons. The residents' shame represents a superficial response to "getting caught," not deep penitence. Psychologically unstable people like the Richards are unable to learn moral lessons from their experiences. Briden also offers Tom Sawyer's argument against fortunate fall philosophy from *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1892-94). Tom states that lessons learned from life "ain't no account, because the thing don't happen the same way again—and can't." Using textual evidence from the story, related works by Twain or other relevant literary works, argue for or against one or more of the points delineated by Briden. You may also choose to compare the Briden's various points and note contradictions or expand on them.

Compare and Contrast

1844: Samuel Morse sends his first message over telegraph.

1876: Alexander Graham Bell invents the first "speaking telegraph" machine, or telephone. Advances in communications technology shrink the geographical distance between regions, which allows Americans to view themselves as a nation.

1990s: The Internet and the World Wide Web become household words. With the click of a "mouse," individuals connect with people all over the globe. The development of fiber optics in communications technology makes high quality, overseas calling inexpensive and convenient. The world is often described as a "global village."

1860s-1880s: The American railroad industry standardizes and consolidates routes, which facilitates movement of freight and passengers between different regions. In 1886 railroads adopt a standard gauge. In 1883 the American Railway Association establishes four national times zones (Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific) to standardize train schedules.

1976: Regular commercial flights of the British- French supersonic transport plane, the Concorde begin. Breaking the sound barrier, the Concorde's maximum cruising speed is 1,354 miles per hour. Traveling west, time of arrival is hours earlier than time of departure. For example, a departure from London at 6 p.m. arrives in New York at 4 p.m. the same day.

1860s-1890s: "The Gilded Age," a phrase coined by Twain, describes a period of industrial progress and wealth, during which a few industrialist prosper while the majority of Americans work in unsafe factories for low wages. Corruption, scandal, and bribery pervade Washington, D.C., as "big business" interferes with the legislative process.

1992-2000: William Jefferson Clinton serves as President. America experiences a period of unprecedented economic growth. The Clinton administration predicts a budget surplus of $9.5 billion for 1999 and estimated to grow to $1.1 trillion by 2010. In 1999, the nation struggles with moral questions in the wake of Clinton's "inappropriate" sexual relations with an intern.

1886: Haymarket Riots in Chicago. Workers demonstrate for safer conditions and an eighthour workday. Largely due to the violent nature of the riots, the workers fail. In 1918, the Supreme Court reverses the Keating-Owen Act (1916), which regulated child labor. The eighthour workday and six-day workweek become the standard for U.S. factories during World War I. Employers concede to workers' demands as increased mechanization increases productivity.

1990s: Multinational corporations allegedly exploit foreign labor to gain competitive advantage in a global marketplace. For instance, Asian workers earn low wages producing shoes that retail for over $100.

What Do I Read Next?

Genesis 1-3, The Old Testament contains the story of Adam and Eve, the Original Sin, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. "Hadleyburg" is often interpreted as an allegory of this story.

The Awakening (1899) by Kate Chopin, published the same year as "Hadleyburg," provides a woman's point of view on the oppressions of community. The protagonist, Edna Pontellier, struggles with traditional expectations of a wife and mother. In her rigid society her attempts to break boundaries results in tragedy.

The Yellow Wallpaper (1899) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman explores in eye-opening detail the alarming consequences of societal oppression of women whose desires transgress patriarchal norms.

The Scarlet Letter (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne relates the story of Hester Prynne, a Puritan woman who bears a minister's child out of wedlock. Refusing to reveal the father's name, she is forced to wear a red letter "A" as punishment. This novel is a deep exploration of the often-malicious motives of collective identity and community.

A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890) by William Dean Howells explores the psychological struggles of a self-made American millionaire who finds his financial interests at odds with his social conscience. Howells was a close personal friend of Twain and one of his most ardent literary admirers.

Paradise Lost (1667) by John Milton is an epic poem describing the fall of humankind. The poem views the original Fall as fortunate and ultimately redemptive and develops Satan's character in detail. Critics argue that Milton created a sympathetic portrait of him, likening the arch- fiend to a tragic hero. The poem also introduces the idea of a Satan who unwittingly performs God's will. Difficult read for younger readers.

"Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" (1865) by Mark Twain is considered the story that launched Twain's literary career. The work exemplifies his humorous style and features the "frame narrative" or story-within-a-story that became one of his hallmarks. The story also uses the "anti-genteel" narrator that frequently appears in his work.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885) by Mark Twain is considered one of his masterpieces, and it exemplifies his humorously ironic style and simultaneously addresses historical issues.

"The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) by Edgar Allen Poe, a classic "revenge story", has been identified as a source for "Hadleyburg." The tone and meaning of Poe's macabre story is much more somber and fatalistic.

Further Study

Briden, Earl F. "Twainian Pedagogy and the No-Account Lessons of 'Hadleyburg,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. 28, No. 2, 1991, pp. 125-34.

Argues against "fortunate fall" interpretations of "Hadleyburg," delineating obstacles presented in the narrative for such readings.

Briden, Earl F. and Mary Prescott. "The Lie that I Am I: Paradoxes of Identity in Mark Twain's 'Hadleyburg.'" in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. 21, No. 4, 1984, pp. 383-91.

Discusses the contradictory pressures of individualism and social conformity, identifying the consequences for characters who "slavishly" seek social approval.

Emerson, Everett. *The Authentic Mark Twain: A Literary Biography of Samuel L. Clemens,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

Comprehensive biography of Clemens and the development of his persona "Mark Twain," detailing his literary career.

Quirk, Tom. *Mark Twain: A Study of the Short Fiction,* New York: Twayne, 1997.

Concise three-part analysis of Twain's major short stories in their historical context, comprising Twain's biography, excerpted works, critical essays, and chronology. A solid introduction to Twain's stories.

Rucker, Mary E. "Moralism and Determinism in 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 14, 1977, pp. 49-54.

Outlines the thematic debate surrounding the story, emphasizing the incompatibility of both schools of thought to show that neither theme informs "Hadleyburg."

Scharnhorst, Gary. "Paradise Revisited: Twain's 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction,* Vol. 18, No. 1, 1981, pp. 59-64.

Examines the "moralism versus determinism" debate, explicating "Hadleyburg" in terms of Milton's influence and the "fortunate fall" myth.

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Review of *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories,* in *Living Age,* Vol. 227, December 15, 1900, pp. 695.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) 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, SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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

SSfS 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS 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 Short Stories for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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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