Maggie: A Girl of the Streets Study Guide

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was first published at his own expense in 1893. Literary critic William Dean Howells was so impressed with the novel that he helped get it published by D. Appleton and Company in 1896. *Maggie* came to be regarded as one of Crane's finest and most eloquent statements on environmental determinism.

The story centers on Maggie Johnson, a pretty young woman who struggles to survive the brutal environment of the Bowery, a New York City slum, at the end of the nineteenth century. Abused by an alcoholic mother and victimized by the overwhelming poverty of the slums, Maggie falls in love with a charming bartender, who, she tells herself, will help her escape her harsh life. Maggie's relationship with Pete compounds her suffering, however, when her family and her neighbors condemn her. Eventually abandoned by her lover, as well as her family, Maggie is forced to make a living on the cruel city streets. Crane's unblinking depiction of the devastating environmental forces that ultimately destroy this young, hopeful woman was celebrated as one of the most important documents of American naturalism.

Author Biography

Stephen Crane was born on November 1, 1871, in Newark, New Jersey, the last of fourteen children to Jonathan and Mary. His father was a Methodist minister and his mother was an active member of the church and reform work, including the temperance movement. Crane's upbringing in this religious household profoundly influenced his own worldview, which he eloquently expressed in his works. James B. Colvert, in his article for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, notes that Crane's poetry especially reflects "the anguish of a spiritual crisis in which he attempted to exorcise the Pecks' God of wrath and, beyond that, to test his faith in general against the moral realities" of the 1890s, which he recorded during his years as a reporter. His religious questioning was a primary subject in much of his fiction.

Crane began his career as a newspaper reporter after his father died and the family moved to Asbury Park, New Jersey, where his brother Townley ran a news agency for the *New York Tribune*. Townley and another brother, Will, encouraged Crane to rebel against his strict, religious upbringing and helped him develop a secular worldview, which was reinforced during his years at Lafayette College and Syracuse University. During his college years, Crane continued to write newspaper articles and began writing fiction.

After leaving college without obtaining a degree, Crane moved to New York City where he continued his work as a newspaper reporter. When he was twenty-two, he wrote under the pseudonym Johnston Smith and published at his own expense, his first novel, *Maggie*. He did not, however, gain fame until the publication of his second novel, *Red Badge of Courage*, which was heralded internationally as one of the finest war novels ever written.

During this time, Crane continued to work as a reporter in the west and in Mexico. In the late 1890s, he moved with Cora Taylor, a hotel/brothel proprietor, to England where he met Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, and Henry James. He continued writing fiction there and worked occasionally as a reporter, since his later novels were not well received. His travels, however, caused his health to deteriorate. Crane died of tuberculosis in 1900 when he was twenty-eight. In his short lifetime, he had produced a remarkable volume of work, including numerous newspaper articles, six novels, more than a hundred stories and sketches, and two books of poems.

Plot Summary

Part 1

The novel opens with young Jimmie in the midst of a street fight "for the honor of Rum Alley," a tenement street in New York City at the end of the nineteenth century. Jimmie is caught up in the "fury of battle" as he is continually assaulted by a gang of children from nearby Devil's Row. He alone defends his street after his compatriots have run off. Some workmen watch the bruised and bloody-faced boy with mild interest and no intervention until a sixteen-year-old boy named Pete approaches and, after recognizing Jimmie, pulls the assailants off of him. When Jimmie's friends return, the child upbraids them for leaving him to fend for himself until he gets into a fight with one of them. Jimmie's father soon arrives and breaks up the fight by kicking his son and his combatant. The battered boy then sullenly follows his father home. On the way, they meet his younger brother Tommie and his sister Maggie. When she complains that his fighting angers their mother, Jimmie slaps her.

At home, their drunken mother explodes in anger after seeing Jimmie's bruises and begins to inflict some of her own on the boy. When Mr. Johnson complains that she beats the children too often, she turns on him, and they engage in a fierce quarrel that ends with his departure to the local pub. During this brutal scene, the children cower in the corner. Mrs. Johnson flies into a new rage after Maggie accidentally breaks a dish and Jimmie escapes to the hallway, where an elderly female resident joins him, listening to the shrieks emanating from the Johnson's apartment.

The old woman asks Jimmie to slip down to the pub and buy her some beer. After completing his mission, his father spots him and steals the beer from him, drinking in down in one gulp. When Jimmie returns to the apartment later that night, he discovers that his parents are engaged in a new fight, and so he waits in the hallway until the noise dies down. After returning home to find his parents passed out on the floor, Jimmie and Maggie sit in fear, watching their mother's prostrate body until dawn.

Part 2

Some years later, Tommie has died and Jimmie has grown into a hardened young man who has "clad his soul in armor." He takes a job as a truck driver, which gives him a measure of pride, and gains a reputation as a troublemaker with the police. Jimmie easily lives up to that estimation, determining "never to move out of the way of anything, until formidable circumstances, or a much larger man than himself forced him to it." After his father dies, he becomes the head of the household.

Maggie "blossomed in a mud puddle" into a rare sight in the tenements□a pretty girl. She gains employment at a shop where she makes collars and cuffs along with several other young women of "various shades of yellow discontent." The "eternally swollen and

disheveled" Mrs. Johnson has become famous in the neighborhood, especially at the police station and the courts, where she offers a continual stream of excuses and prayers for her troubles.

One day Jimmie brings Pete home, and Maggie is immediately impressed by his dress and his confident air, as he gestures like "a man of the world." She is an attentive audience for his tales of valor in his position as bartender, which involves dealing forcibly with anyone who disrupts his bar, and soon determines that he is "the ideal man." She admires his elegance and the way he defies the hardships of tenement life. Pete also takes notice of Maggie, declaring eventually to her, "I'm stuck on yer shape." The two begin to go out on dates.

On their first evening out, Maggie is embarrassed by her mother's drunken state and the disheveled apartment that her mother has wrecked in one of her tirades that afternoon. Maggie has only a shabby black dress to wear and is "afraid she might appear small and mouse-colored" in contrast to Pete and his crowd, which she is certain will be quite elegant.

Pete takes Maggie to a vaudeville show, where he displays a confident indifference to all. His attitude impresses Maggie and reinforces her vision of his superiority. Pete showers attention on her, which she revels in, along with the performances on stage. After the show, Pete asks for a kiss, but Maggie declines, insisting "dat wasn't in it." On the walk home, Pete wonders if he has "been played fer a duffer," expecting Maggie to offer some more tangible form of gratitude.

As Maggie and Pete continue to date, she becomes more critical of her clothes, her home, and her job, and Pete becomes more like "a golden sun" to her. The two attend plays and museums, which excite Maggie but bore Pete.

One evening, Jimmie finds his mother staggering home from a bar from which she has just been ejected, jeered on by the local children and her tenement neighbors. An embarrassed Jimmie yells at her to shut up and get into the apartment. Inside, the two begin a fierce battle that ends with broken furniture and Mrs. Johnson in her usual position in a heap on the floor. When Pete arrives, he shrugs and tells Maggie they will have a good time that night. Mrs. Johnson curses her daughter, insisting that she is a disgrace to the family and tells her not to return, which causes Maggie to tremble. Pete insists that her mother will change her mind in the morning and the two depart.

Part 3

Jimmie is decidedly upset that Pete has "ruined" his sister. The old neighbor tells him that she saw Maggie return home one evening, crying to Pete, asking him if he loved her. Jimmie determines to kill him while Mrs. Johnson curses her. Soon all of the neighbors are discussing Maggie and her ruin, insisting that they knew that there was always something wrong with her.

One evening, Jimmie and a friend enter Pete's bar and begin to harass him. Pete tries to calm him down but Jimmie and his friend back him into a corner and a fight breaks out. Soon all of the bar's patrons join in, smashing the mirrored walls, bottles, and glassware. When the police appear, Jimmie dashes out just in time.

On a subsequent evening, Pete and Maggie attend a show. She has changed markedly, her sense of self now lost in her complete dependence on Pete, whose confidence has grown as Maggie's has diminished. Pete is proud of the effect he has on Maggie, who fears any sign of anger or displeasure from him. Others at the show treat her with the same lack of respect as her neighbors have.

When Jimmie returns home several days after the fight, he discovers that Maggie has not been home either. He and his mother are shamed by her behavior, but Mrs. Johnson uses her tale of woe as an effective method to gain leniency when she is arrested for drunkenness.

Three weeks after she leaves her home, Maggie accompanies Pete to another show where he runs into an old friend, who pays no attention to Maggie. As Pete shows his obvious pleasure in the other woman's company, Maggie can think of nothing to say. When the woman asks Pete to leave with her, he initially refuses to abandon Maggie, hinting that she is pregnant. However, when he goes outside to discuss his situation, he never comes back for Maggie, stranding her at the show. An astounded Maggie waits for quite a while until she accepts the fact that Pete is gone and then leaves.

Part 4

The narrative jumps here to a time in the future when an unidentified "forlorn woman" wanders the streets in search of someone. As Jimmie walks up the street and the woman greets him, the reader learns that the woman is Hattie, apparently someone who is in a similar situation to that of Maggie. Jimmie turns his back on her, just as Pete has done with Maggie, departing with an admonition to "go t'hell." When he arrives home, he finds Maggie suffering her mother's wrath and ridicule. Neighbors join in the torment until Maggie turns to Jimmie for support and is rebuffed.

The narrator now focuses on Pete, who has not given a second thought to Maggie's fate. He determines that he has never really cared much for her and was in no way responsible for her. The evening after he leaves her at the show, Maggie walks by his bar, and he feels a temporary twinge of guilt. When he speaks with her, though, he shows no mercy, telling her to leave before she gets him in trouble. She asks him where she should go, and he answers, as Jimmie had done to his similar "problem," "oh, go t'hell."

Afterwards, Maggie wanders the streets, looking for some support but finds none. Several months later, she is still walking the streets, willing to offer herself to anyone in order to survive. Initially, she frequents the more well-respected areas of town, but the men there soon realize her lack of refinement and so reject her advances. Even when

she walks on to the poorer sections of the city, she has no luck. She moves onto the worst sections near the river where she encounters "ragged" men "with shifting, blood-shot eyes and grimy hands." The narrator suggests at this point that Maggie is drawn to the river, where the "sounds of life . . . came faintly and died away to a silence" and jumps in.

Pete and several women, including the woman who lured him away from Maggie, participate in a drunken revelry in a local saloon. They all seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. Pete gets too drunk, however, which eventually disgusts the women who leave him in a heap on the floor. The woman whom he has admired so much concludes on her way out of the bar, "what a damn fool."

The novel closes with Mrs. Johnson's tearful response to Jimmie's report that Maggie has died. At last, Mrs. Johnson expresses tender feelings toward her daughter and swears she will forgive her.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The story begins with a street fight between two groups of boys: the Rum Alley boys vs. the Devil's Row boys. The boys are hurling rocks and insults at each other. Jimmie, a tiny would-be champion stands in the middle of the group on a heap of gravel articulating his own curses. The enemies charge him and tackle him, throwing punches, insults, and rocks. Soon, Jimmie is a bloody mess with tears staining his dirty face.

As the Devil's Row boys began to revel in their conquest, a 16-year-old boy saunters down the avenue. He walks up behind one of the Devil's Row boys and hits him fiercely on the head. He and other boys notice the size of him and they retreat, which saves Jimmie from the fight. The Rum Alley boys head for home. Soon, another fight breaks out between Jimmie and Blue Billie because, in Jimmie's eyes, Blue Billie did not perform well in the fight with the Devil's Row boys. As they roll around in the street exchanging blows, a small boy tries to warn Jimmie of his approaching father. The two boys do not hear the warnings and continue to fight. Jimmie's father approaches the two and begins kicking fiercely at both of them. Blue Billie suffers a blow to the head and struggles to free himself from Jimmie's clutches. Then Jimmie senses his father's presence and slowly and painfully gets up. He follows a good distance behind his father as they both return home. Jimmie's personality and direction in life are foreshadowed in this opening chapter.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The desire to be tough is characterized by the fighting. Just as one fight ends, Jimmie finds himself starting another one. He wants to be a tough, valiant, honored boy of the streets. Pete, the 16-year-old who breaks up the first fight, is able to do so because of his size and stature. Size and stature also breaks up the second fight when Jimmie's father approaches and begins kicking at the two boys. Ironically, this is what the boys are after themselves: size and stature.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

As the father and son return home to the dark and unkempt building, they pass by many unattended children and women quarrelling in the street. They soon meet Maggie, who is pulling on a reluctant Tommie. They are Jimmie's siblings. Maggie cries out to Jimmie when she sees that he's been fighting again. She reminds him of how their mother gets "put out" by the fighting and that they are likely to "take a poundin'" from her. Jimmie gets upset with her and warns her that he is going to hit her if she does not shut up. He follows through with his warning and hits her right there on the street. The father finally hears the two of them fighting and puts an end to it. They approach their door and enter into the room to find their mother watching them. Instantly, she sees that Jimmie has been fighting again and begins to clean him up while he shrieks in pain. The father can no longer handle all the commotion and hollers out to his wife to leave Jimmie alone. The mother finishes cleaning Jimmie's wounds and then marches over to the father with anger for "sticking his nose" in her business. He accuses Mary, the mother, of drinking. While the two of them continue to fight, the children retreat to a safe place in the room out of the way of their feuding parents. The fighting between Mary and her husband ends when he leaves for the bar. Mary feeds the children supper and begins to drink. Her anger turns into sadness until Maggie breaks a plate. Instantly, Mary is on her feet and is so angry her face turns from red to purple. Just then, Jimmie runs up the stairs to a neighbor's apartment and knocks on her door.

Chapter 2 Analysis

All the family members in Jimmie's family are full of anger. They take out their anger on each other and the people on the street. They also vent their anger in the form of insults, shouting, pulling, and hitting. Jimmie's father says to him, "...It's like I can never beat any sense into yer wooden head." Figuratively, as well as literally, it appears that beatings are a regular occurrence in this family. That point is demonstrated further when Jimmie goes upstairs to seek escape from his mother's rage. Instantly, the neighbor woman asks who is getting the beating this time.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Jimmie and the neighbor woman listen in the hallway to the fighting. She gives Jimmie a pail and asks him to fetch her some beer at the bar. He takes the money and the pail and goes to the bar to get it filled. As he is nearing the doorway to their building, he runs into his drunken father. His father realizes it is for the old woman and snatches it from Jimmie and drinks it all. He throws the pail down and it hits Jimmie in the head. In his anger, Jimmie begins to kick his father's shins. His father leaves him in the street and returns home. Jimmie waits a long time before returning to the apartment building. He passes the door of the old woman and quietly listens to the sounds coming from inside his apartment. His parents are again fighting about Jimmie's constant fighting on the street. The mother complains that Jimmie is always ripping his clothes. Their fighting escalates and soon Jimmie hears furniture breaking and the sound begins to draw the attention of other neighbors. Jimmie hides further down the stairway and waits to return home until he can no longer hear any noises. When he enters, he finds that his parents are asleep. He hears his sister cry out to him and sees that she has been crying. Together, they comfort each other as dawn approaches.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In an effort to escape their dismal existence, both parents turn to alcohol. Little do they realize that the use of alcohol only adds to their problems. The father leaves the apartment to drink after the fight with his wife, and the wife drinks in the house while the children eat dinner. The mother's mood changes from anger to sadness and back again to anger upon the breaking of a plate. Jimmie escapes the rage and finds solace in the home of his neighbor. The father returns home drunk, which only adds fuel to the fire at home where the mother and father continue their fighting.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Time passes quickly in this chapter. Tommie dies, but Jimmie and Maggie survive. Jimmie grows up on the street and sees as much anger there as he does in his own home. This toughens him as he grows up. For a long time, Jimmie stands on street corners and watches the world pass by. He grows to hate well-dressed businessmen and obvious Christians. His father dies, and his mother is not doing well. Jimmie loves having money in his pocket so he gets a job driving a team of horses. The best part of his job is the ability to sit up high as he passes by everyone in the street. The belief that he is above the others regularly gets Jimmie in trouble with the law. Jimmie sees the world around him as people who are all "against him." The one thing that Jimmie respects is the fire engine. He will stop at nothing to get out of the way of the fire engine, even if it means arriving on the sidewalk and injuring passersby. As he grows up, he feels no responsibility to anyone other than himself. He even ignores the claims from two women that he fathered their children.

Chapter 4 Analysis

As a means of survival, Jimmie becomes indifferent to the world. He uses it as his protection. If he is indifferent, then no harm can come to him. He works to earn money because he likes the feeling of having money in his pocket, but he has no respect for the businessmen who earn more money than he does. Jimmie assumes an air of superiority that he also uses to protect himself. In this, he thinks he is better than the lowly people he passes on the street as he sits high atop the wagon pulled by a team of horses.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Maggie grows up to be a good-looking girl. Soon, the boys in the neighborhood begin to notice her. Jimmie takes over the role of head of the house after the death of their father and encourages Maggie to get a job. Maggie finds work in the shirt factory for 5 dollars a week. Mary's drinking becomes more frequent, she finds herself in trouble with the law regularly, and she is soon on a first-name basis with the police and court officials. Jimmie encounters Pete again on the street one day, and soon they begin to see each other regularly. Maggie notices Pete and finds him very attractive in his fine suits. Maggie listens attentively to Pete's stories and falls in love with him.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The fine clothing that Pete wears is symbolic of the life that Maggie wants to lead. As Maggie sees his fine clothing, she also begins to see how shabbily they live. Maggie watches closely, examines his clothing, and decides that he will get soiled just by sitting in their apartment. At this point, Maggie imagines that Pete is "the ideal man" based on his clothing and the worldly experience that he has gained through his work as a bartender.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Pete takes notice of Maggie and continues telling his tales. Soon, Pete and Jimmie leave, but Maggie goes to the window to watch them as they disappear into the night. Immediately, she begins to notice that their home has faded and become worn. Maggie begins to think about Pete and then thinks about how dreary her job at the factory is compared to the elegance of Pete's occupation. She thinks that surely Pete will be visiting again soon, so she decides to spend some of her money on a "lambrequin" to dress up the place for his next visit. At his next visit, Pete asks Maggie out on a date. When Pete arrives on Friday night to pick up Maggie, her mother is completely drunk and has ravaged the apartment. The lambrequin lies in a heap on the floor.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Ironically, the money that Maggie spent on the lambrequin was wasted. Maggie's hard work to spruce up the place for Pete's arrival was all in vain. When Pete arrives to pick her up, the house is in worse shape than ever with furniture strewn about and broken. Mary's binge drinking is becoming more of a regular occurrence, which results in tirades and damage to the house. The reader may question why the children do nothing about the mother's drinking problem.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Pete takes Maggie to the theater. It is her first time there, and she sees many new things. She hears the music from the orchestra and sees the people all around her. Pete is very gracious and attentive to Maggie. Maggie is enthralled with the performance, but Pete just drinks his beer and watches Maggie. Meanwhile, Maggie is full of excitement and forgets all about her dull life and job. When the performances are over, Pete walks Maggie home and expects a kiss. With a smile, she turns and goes up the stairs home.

Chapter 7 Analysis

In a short time, Pete transports Maggie from her dull and dreary life and introduces her to the theater where a new world unfolds in front of her. She is so overwhelmed with the sights and sounds that she hardly pays any attention at all to Pete. The world of the theater allows her to escape her humdrum life if only for a short while. The scenes in the theater are vivid and colorful, contrary to the gray and colorless home in which Maggie lives.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The more Maggie thinks of Pete, the more dissatisfied she becomes with her life. The dresses she owns are no longer suitable to her, and she begins to pay particular attention to the finely dressed women on the street. The air in the shirt factory begins to suffocate her, and she longs for a friend with whom she could discuss her feelings about Jimmy. Maggie's mother is often drunk and furious, and Jimmie usually comes home stumbling after a late night drinking binge at the bar, so she has no one to talk to about her feelings. Pete continues to take Maggie out on dates to places she has never seen before and often to the theater. Maggie always leaves the plays with an upbeat feeling, and she wonders whether she will experience the same cultural refinements as the heroines in the plays.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Again, the plays allow Maggie to mull the possibility of a better life. The theater opens Maggie's eyes to a better life, and she wants the same things she sees on the stage Much of the chapter describes the plot of the play in which the hero, a regular poor man, triumphs over the villain and the rich man. This is what prompts Maggie to think about whether she can triumph over the villains in her life.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

This chapter opens as the bartender kicks Mary out of the bar for a "disturbance." In the street a group of "urchins" await her appearance so they can taunt her. The children retreat as Mary charges after them. Mary eventually stumbles into the tenement building creating considerable noise. The noise prompts doors to open, and inhabitants to peer out. Mary approaches one door as it slams in her face. She demands the occupant to open the door for "a scrap" but the door remains closed. Jimmie comes home as his mother rants and raves in the hallway. He tells her to "shut yer face, an' come home, yeh old fool!" (156) She resists his orders to go home and they begin to fight in the hallway outside their room. Maggie opens their door and Jimmie throws their mother into the room. Mary lies there on the floor crying while Jimmie goes outside to the hall to get away from the whole scene. As Maggie looks around the room she notices that her mother and brother in their fighting have overturned the furniture again, there is broken crockery everywhere, and even a pail of water has been overturned. Just then, Pete arrives and sees what has just happened. Pete whispers into Maggie's ear to leave with him. Mary starts yelling and telling Maggie how she's a disgrace and gone "t' d' devil" (157). Maggie looks long and hard at her mother and the mess of the house and decides to leave with Pete.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Fighting is a recurring theme in this story. It is almost as if the characters are bred to fight. Mary is so bitter about the world and everyone in it that she appears to be capable only of lashing out abusive comments and starting physical fights. She expresses her anger by destroying her belongings. She continues to throw furniture and ceramic dishes about but does not clean up after herself. Maggie is always the one who cleans up the messes her mother leaves behind. Maggie finally can take no more of it and decides to leave with Pete despite the hurtful accusations and lamentations her mother shouts after her. Mary thinks that by leaving with Pete, Maggie is turning her back on her and the family. Maggie leaves simply because she is tired of the same old scene. Maggie wants more and with Pete, she has already seen how much better life can be.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

As Jimmie comes home, the old neighbor woman tells him of what she had seen the previous night. Apparently, Pete and Maggie returned late the night before to the apartment. Maggie was crying hard as if her heart were broken asking Pete if he loved her. He replied that he did, but Maggie kept on crying. Jimmie immediately gets angry thinking about how his friend "ruined" his sister. Jimmie enters their room and notices that someone has picked up as best as possible. Jimmie also notices that Maggie's hat and coat are gone. Jimmie's temper flares and announces his intention to kill Pete. As he attempts to storm out of the apartment, his mother appears in the doorway blocking him. Mary demands to know what has him all excited. Jimmie tells her about how Maggie has "gone t' d' devil" and soon both of them are beside themselves with hysteria and anger. Jimmie goes out to find Pete and take his anger out on him. Mary stays behind and curses Maggie's behavior. As Pete leaves the tenement building, various neighbors are expressing how they knew all along that she was bad and how they saw it coming. On the street, Jimmie meets up with a pal, and Jimmie tells him of his intentions.

Chapter 10 Analysis

This "gone t' d' devil" condition may be hard for the contemporary reader to understand, but keep in mind that this story was first published in 1893, and the language of the day was considerably different. Unlike today, a girl from this era who lost her virginity outside of marriage was considered to be "fallen," and often the family rejected her. This loss of virtue brought much shame to the family. Without even talking to Maggie about whether it was true or not, Mary and Jimmie assume the worst and cast her aside. Hypocrisy surfaces in this chapter regarding Jimmie's anger at Pete for deflowering his sister as he contemplates whether or not the women he has come to know have brothers that may someday come after him.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Jimmie and his pal start drinking and make their way to the bar where Pete works. Both of them arrive drunk and defiant and immediately begin making fun of Pete behind the bar. Irritated, Pete tries to find out what has them all worked up. Jimmie and his pal order gin, and they refuse to answer Pete but continue to throw insults at him. To this, Pete responds with a threat that he will kick Jimmie and his pal out if they cause any trouble. This threat just adds fuel to the fire, and Jimmie tests him with a "what if we do" type of attitude to which Pete replies with a warning of a fight. Pete comes around from behind the bar and approaches the two of them, and they all face off. Pete throws the first punch that starts the brawl. With glasses and bottles crashing into the walls and the bar shelves, people come running from the street into the saloon. Soon a police officer arrives and breaks up the brawl. Immediately, Jimmie flees the grips of the police officer through a side door. Watching from a safe and hidden corner, Jimmie considers helping his friend who is being escorted by the police officer, but he decides against it.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Alcoholism and pride play into the characters' decisions in this chapter. Jimmie believes Pete is the cause of his sister's demise, which "causes" him to get drunk before he goes to see Pete at work, and where he proceeds to insult Pete. Pete's pride takes a few blows from Jimmie and his pal at the bar, so Pete decides he needs to stand up for himself if these two do not behave. Jimmie and his companion test Pete until he can take no more of it. The three men find themselves tangled in a barroom brawl.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Pete and Maggie visit the theater again and are entertained by the performers on stage. During the conversation, Maggie tells Pete of past incidences of her family's insults, tempers, and rages. Pete denounces both her brother and her mother for the way they have treated Maggie. As the music begins to play, Maggie watches Pete and equates his fine dress to a newer, finer way of life for herself. Maggie is now happy and decides that she will be so as long as Pete adores her. Then, she begins to notice the other men near them. There are older men and younger men trying to make eye contact with her. Maggie begins to feel uncomfortable and decides that she would rather leave than sit there with the men gawking at her thinking she was something other than what she was. On their way out, Maggie notices two women all made up at a table with a group of men.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Maggie appears to be uneasy in Pete's presence. Her former feeling of self-reliance has shifted quickly to dependence on Pete. Maggie loved the arrogance that he exuded and marveled at how even seated he could still strut. Despite his arrogant demeanor, the wait staff regarded him indifferently or disregarded him altogether. The performance on stage enabled to her dream. Maggie dreams about how her former life in Rum Alley and the hardships she faced. She then dreams about how Pete is her new protector and with him, everything will be fine. This napve attitude helped along by the constant victories of the heroines on stage skew her ability to make objective and thoughtful decisions. When Maggie notices the heavily made-up women upon their departure from the theater, it offers the reader a tiny hint of foreshadowing regarding Maggie's fate.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Jimmie does not return home for several days after the fight in the bar with Pete. When he does return, he finds his mother raving again about Maggie's disgraceful behavior. The fact that the neighbors bring the topic up to her infuriates her. Jimmie and Mary discuss the embarrassing situation into which Maggie has put them. The two of them talk about how they may react when Maggie returns home to them. Mary even mocks the words that Maggie might use upon her return when she begs to be allowed to live at home again. Mary ends her opinionated statement with the sentiment that she will never give Maggie a second chance. Jimmie thinks for a time or two again, about whether any of the women in his life have brothers that might be coming after him for ruining their sisters' lives. Instantly, his ambivalence toward women ends those thoughts. From this time forward, Mary goes through life in sorrow, drinking too much, and recalling her woes to all who might listen.

Chapter 13 Analysis

It is ironic that Maggie's mother finds it hard to believe that Maggie makes the decisions she does. Mary believes that she was a great role model for Maggie and provided incredible direction and advice to prevent such a thing from happening to her own daughter. The reader may find Mary's position utterly laughable since Mary herself hardly leads a model life. In this chapter, Jimmie foretells that Maggie will return to the house. Mary is an overly dramatic woman. For example, when she and Jimmie talk about how they might react about Maggie's return, Jimmie offers that he could go find her and bring her back. To that Mary comes unglued! She tells him that never did she think that when he was a young child would he ever consider saying such a blasphemous thing to her. Mary's heart is cold. She is not just full of anger, but full of hate as well.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Three weeks has past since Maggie left home that night with Pete. Maggie and Pete walk into a filled hall and find a table. Soon an arrogant, well-dressed woman enters with a very young man and sits near Pete and Maggie. When Pete spies her, he is filled with excitement and greets her with exuberance. It is clear to Maggie that Pete and this woman, Nellie, have a history. Nellie invites Pete and Maggie to join her and her companion. As Pete and Nellie reminisce, Maggie is aware of her inability to contribute to the conversation and sits staring blankly at the two of them and feeling uncomfortable and low. As Nellie talks, Maggie watches Pete as he exuberantly pays attention to every word. Nellie's companion, Freddie, makes every effort to show off his wealth in front of the other couple, but Nellie and Pete pay little attention to either him or Maggie. As if Nellie and Pete were sitting alone, Nellie asks him to join her at Billie's for a good time. Pete declines on account of Maggie. Rebuked, Nellie pouts and makes a childish statement to Pete and instantly turns her attention back to Freddie, who is on the verge of starting a fight with Pete. Hurt, Pete insists that Nellie go outside with him so he can explain the situation between him and Maggie. The two excuse themselves and Freddie and Maggie find themselves sitting alone, jilted. Maggie could hardly believe the effect Nellie's rejection had on Pete for she had never before seen him show such emotion. After sitting for 30 minutes awaiting their return, Freddie explains the situation to Maggie about the meanness of the business. The two of them have a drink together before Maggie announces her desire to go home. Freddie puts her in a car and pays for her ride home.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Indifference and a disregard for the feelings of others is less troublesome to these characters than taking care of their individual needs. The need to feel important is paramount to the characters' sense of esteem and worth. Maggie's self-worth plummets when she realizes that Pete is not going to be returning to her. It is obvious that Pete and Nellie have a connection deeper than the ones they have with their companions of the night. When Nellie devotes her time and attention to Pete, she ignores Freddie or dismisses him when he tries to join the conversation. Nellie does not even acknowledge Maggie's presence at the table, often looking through her or right past her but never at her. Pete's animated reaction to Nellie is contrary to his cool and reserved persona. Pete has not been accommodating to anyone but it is obvious how much he wants to please Nellie. So long as these individuals get what they want, they could not care less about how their words or actions affect others.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

A woman he is obviously avoiding confronts Jimmie. Hattie approaches him as he exits a bar. To escape from her pleading, he enters another bar and exits via the convenient side door unnoticed by Hattie. When he returns home, he finds his mother in an uproar because Maggie has returned home, trembling from the wrath her mother is inflicting upon her. Mary's shouting draws the attention of the tenement building's occupants, and they all open their doors once they find out Maggie has returned. In front of all of them, Mary announces to all to have a look at her daughter. Maggie reaches for Jimmie and pleads with him. He rebukes her and reacts as if her touch has ruined him, also. As she turns away from all of them, she runs into the old gnarled neighbor woman who graciously offers her a place to stay on the account that she has no "moral standin.'" As the chapter closes, her mother's laughter can be heard above all the other chatter.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Avoiding responsibility is a key theme in this chapter. A girl with whom Jimmie has probably enjoyed a sexual relationship confronts him. Hattie has come to plead with him about his promises. He avoids whatever responsibility he owes her or even continuing the conversation with her by escaping into the bar and out the side door. . Mary has shirked the responsibility for providing a safe and quiet home for her children throughout her life, but the climax occurs here when she rejects Maggie. Her failure to accept Maggie and forgive her forces Maggie out. Mary and Jimmie publicly humiliate Maggie and then leave her to fend for herself.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Pete ponders the situation with Maggie and decides that he is not the cause for the ruin of Maggie; it is her brother and her mother who are responsible for the reprehensible manner in which they handled their relations with Maggie. As Pete dries glasses, he notices Maggie hovering outside the bar. Instantly, he fears the reaction his boss may have if a scene takes place revealing their relationship. Despite his fear, he tells Maggie to come inside the bar. He instantly takes his position of prominence behind the bar. Maggie pleads with him, but Pete's disgust and irritation grow to the point where he tells her to go to hell when she asks him where she could go. Being rejected once again, Maggie leaves. Maggie walks and walks. She realizes that men are watching her, so she decides to walk with a purpose instead to squelch any ideas they might be developing regarding her intentions. Suddenly, she sees a man of faith. Maggie decides to approach him looking to be saved, but once again, is rebuked.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Maggie's life rapidly spirals downward. She never had a good life except for those 3 brief weeks with Pete. After Pete and her family reject her, Maggie finds that she has no place to go. She sees a religious leader, probably a Catholic priest as described by his attire, but he also rejects her. Maggie finds herself all alone on the street, discarded like garbage.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Several months pass. A girl is walking the streets. This unnamed girl passes by throngs of people after their evening entertainment has ended. In their hurry to get out of the rain, they quickly walk past her and barely notice her presence. A few men notice her as she continues her walk to the end of the street at the river. She throws inviting glances at the men that do not have the look of the city on them. Examples of how men on the street react to her are illustrated throughout the chapter, all of which offer rejections or do not have the money to pay her. The unnamed girl continues to walk the streets past the theaters, restaurants, and rows of bars to a place that she calls home.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Without naming the girl as Maggie, the reader assumes it is Maggie. The author describes the experience of a night in the life of a girl on the streets. Loneliness is a prominent theme in this chapter. The girl walks alone, inviting men to purchase her services but with no takers, she continues to be alone. After the repeated rejections, the girl's spirit can be likened to the description of the blackness as she nears her destination. The joyful sounds in the distance are a metaphor to her life. Joy and happiness are far away.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Accompanied by Nell and five other women, Pete is drunk and is frolicking in his drunken stupor and false sense of euphoria. He tells the women about what a good fellow he is and how he will buy them anything they want. The girls want more drinks, so Pete orders the drinks for them. The waiter, disgusted with men who drink too much, reluctantly serves Pete's table. They continue to drink until Pete passes out. Just prior to that, Pete takes out a wad of bills and gives it to Nell accompanied by a statement that he will give her everything he has, including all of his money. Once he passes out, the other women leave, but Nell stays behind to collect all the money he left her. As he begins to snore, Nell calls him a fool and walks out of the saloon.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Abusing alcohol leads to a skewed sense of perception. After reaching a state of drunkenness, Pete's subconscious desires to be well liked and respected repeatedly surface throughout the night. In a state of drunkenness, people lose control of their ability to make good judgments. In Pete's case, in his effort to look good in front of the girls, he ends up looking foolish. The girls use him only for the money he spends on them and nothing else. As soon as he passes out, the girls all leave him. Nell, the last to leave him, stays behind only to collect the money that he put on the table in his drunken stupor.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

The chapter opens with a description of Mary eating at a table. Jimmie enters the room and announces that Maggie is dead. Mary does not believe it at first but then begins to cry. Soon all the tenement neighbor's begin to arrive. One woman leads the rest of them in an attempt to comfort Mary. She begs that Mary will forgive Maggie for all of her sinful ways. Mary remembers the sweet child Maggie had been once. Mary starts talking about the worsted boots she used to wear, and then she finds the baby shoes. Mary demands that Jimmie get his sister and bring her home. All the women are crying and trying to comfort the grieving mother. The chapter and story end with Mary exclaiming, "Oh, yes, I'll fergive her! I'll fergive her!"

Chapter 19 Analysis

Grieving family members and friends often place the departed one upon a pedestal. Sins and minor grievances are forgiven, and all the wonderful things that person ever did are what people choose to remember. In Mary's case, all of her hatred, humiliation, anger, and resentment toward Maggie end as the story ends. If Mary were to forgive Maggie upon her death, why would she not forgive Maggie in life? Consider all the grief that Mary internalized the entire time that Maggie was away from home. Mary's grief and sorrow at the end of the story are comparable to the grief and sorrow that Mary and Jimmie caused Maggie in life. Where one finds peace, the others find grief.

Characters

Jimmie

Jimmie is the oldest of the Johnson's three children, and he is a fighter. The story opens with him leading his neighborhood gang into a confrontation with a gang from a nearby neighborhood that results in a big fight. The fight is broken up initially when an older boy approaches. Shortly thereafter, Jimmie picks a fight with one of the boys from his neighborhood. This fight goes on until Jimmie's father approaches and begins kicking both of them. Jimmie's personality and direction in life are foreshadowed in this opening scene.

As Jimmie grows up, he continues to protect himself from pain by believing that he is better than the others around him, even the wealthy businessmen that he passes on the street. The job he gets as truck driver has him metaphorically sitting on top of the carriage, high above the other people in the street and sidewalks.

Jimmie's nearly total disregard for anyone else's needs is apparent throughout the story. As a child, he ignores his mother's wishes that he not fight because it ruins his clothes. He returns home constantly with bloodstained and torn clothing. As a young man, he neglects to take any responsibility for his relationships with young women. Upon reaching the "head of household" status, he neglects his responsibility to take care of the family by returning home from work drunk. When Maggie's virtue is lost, Jimmie rebukes her in an attempt to redeem himself and distance him from the humiliating life she has chosen to lead.

Pete

Pete is Maggie's beau, who dresses in fine clothes and is always careful about his appearance. Maggie finds him quite attractive despite his apparent shortcomings. To Maggie, he is her knight in shining armor.

Pete takes Maggie out and shows her the ways of the world. Pete introduces her to the theater, beer, and love, or what she believes to be love. Pete adores Maggie and freely spends his time and money with her, until his old flame, Nellie, reappears one night when he is out with Maggie.

Immediately, he tosses Maggie aside and chooses to devote his time and energy to Nell. Even that night when he arrives with Maggie, he leaves with Nell, abandoning Maggie at the table with Nell's companion. Pete's need to take care of his own needs first shows that he has little regard for the needs of other people.

As the story ends, the reader finds out that Pete's life is that of a drunk, still trying to make himself look good to others.

Maggie

Introduced as a little girl pulling her baby brother along through the streets to meet their father, this little girl grows up to be a nice-looking woman. Despite her difficult childhood, she exhibits signs that she is unlike the other members in her family. She does not partake in fighting, nor does she break furniture or cause scenes, even in the end when she visits Pete in the bar.

Maggie finds solace and hope, albeit false, in the heroines who populate the plays that Pete takes her to see. As she falls in love with Pete, her sense of self is awakened. Maggie begins to watch other women and their clothing. Soon, she is not satisfied with the way she and her family live, her clothing, or her job. Now that she knows what is out there and that life does not have to be as she has known it, she wants better. Maggie thinks that with Pete as her protector, life will be better.

That false sense of reality comes crashing down when Pete leaves her for Nellie. Because she chose to live with Pete, she also loses her family. She has nowhere to go once they all reject her. She turns to life on the streets and leads a solitary, sordid life until her death.

Of all the people in this story, the one with the most potential suffers silently and dies alone.

Tommie

Maggie drags around the youngest of the three Johnson children, Tommie, most of the time that he appears in the story. His life ends at an early age because of his inability to withstand the hardships of living with his family.

Nellie

This beautiful and bold woman enters the story shortly after Maggie leaves her family to be with Pete. Nellie not only interrupts their night out on the town, but she also tears them apart.

Not a typical woman of the streets, she wears no "paint" but it is apparent to the reader that she is indeed a prostitute, as Freddie explains to Maggie after Nellie and Pete abandon them. Pete is transfixed by Nellie, and contrary to his tough persona, he melts when he is in her presence.

Nellie reappears at the end of the story as she, still associated with Pete, abandons him in a drunken stupor at the saloon after she gathers up the money he gave her in his feeble attempt to impress her.

Old Woman (Neighbor)

This old woman lived alone near the Johnson family. Early in the story, the old woman's comments to Jimmie when he appears at her door during one of his parents' fights let the reader know that these fights happen regularly. Deformed by arthritis and age, the old woman sits on Fifth Avenue begging for money. The old woman often uses the money for a bucket of beer that Jimmie would get for her. This old woman was just one of many characters who are always peering out from their doors and witnessing the events that unfold in and near the Johnson apartment.

Policeman

Called to the saloon during the fight that broke out when Jimmie and his pal would not leave the bar where Pete was employed, he narrowly missed catching Jimmie after he broke up the fight.

The Heroine

The heroine is always a fledgling character at the beginning of a performance, but she overcomes adversities to become the heroine. Maggie believes in her illusion that she is like the heroine.

Ol' Johnson, Also Known as "Fader"

An angry man filled with hate and resentment toward his family for his miserable life, he is an alcoholic and a violent man. His family suffers frequently from his rages. Fortunately, he dies when the children are still young, freeing them from his wrath.

Freddie

Freddie is the young man who accompanies Nell into the hall where they run into Pete and Maggie. At first, he welcomes the addition, but as Nellie shifts her attention from him to Pete, his mood began to sour. Freddie takes comfort in consuming cocktails and smoking cigars. When Nellie leaves with Pete, he drinks some more with Maggie and explains that his real name is not Freddie. It is obvious that he does not want the girls with whom he associated to know his real name.

Hattie

Hattie enters the story in the Chapter 15 when she confronts Jimmie as he is walking down the street. She is looking for him because she has an important topic to discuss with him. Jimmie refuses to speak with her about it and runs into the nearest bar. He then escapes through a side door and continues home.

Objects/Places

Gruesome Doorway

The author uses this repetitive description to announce the entrance to the tenement building the Johnson family calls home.

Broken Furniture

The Johnson's home contains broken furniture. The fighting is always damaging it and Maggie makes attempts to piece the furniture back together.

Tenement Building

This run-down building is home to many of the city's poorest residents. The Johnson family lives in one of these buildings.

Lambrequin

This is a garment or piece of cloth used to decorate a shelf or mantel.

Theater

This is where Pete takes Maggie on their first date. They frequent the theater often.

Shirt Factory

This is Maggie's first job when Jimmie tells her it is time for her to get a job. It is stifling hot inside, and Maggie has to sew shirt cuffs and collars for $5 a week.

Pete's Bar

The location of Pete's employment is a bar of modest means. It has the appearance of a fine establishment despite the use of lower-quality wood and decorations.

The Street

The street is the setting for many altercations among the characters, but it is also the place that provides Maggie's livelihood.

The Apartment

The apartment is home to the Johnson family, but unlike most homes, this one has no heart in it. It is a poorly furnished residence that is deteriorating rapidly because of the damage the occupants inflict upon it.

Pail

The old neighbor woman gives the pail to Jimmie as a child to fetch her beer. Ironically, his father runs into him in the street and drinks the beer. The old woman also uses it to collect donations from passersby on Fifth Avenue.

Seven Pennies

The old woman put seven pennies that she had collected on Fifth Avenue into the pail so Jimmie could get her a beer.

Worn Black Dress

The dress Maggie wore on her first date with Pete was a worn black dress. He asked her to wear her "best duds."

Team of Horses and Truck

Jimmie got a job as a truck driver. This enabled him to sit high atop the carriage when he drove the wagon.

Social Concerns

The action of Maggie: A. Girl of the Streets takes place entirely within the confines of New York's Bowery district.

Everything the characters think, say, and do is predicated on their surroundings and the facts of their daily existence. This existence is set up as being alien to most of the rest of the world. Alienation is one key to the problems Stephen Crane highlights.

The people of the Bowery are portrayed as both separating themselves and being forcibly separated from any world beyond the Bowery. They appear to have no understanding of the larger world.

They are shown as isolated, dissatisfied, ignorant of other possibilities, and uneducated. Yet, Crane tells us, the residents of the Bowery know that they have in some way been cheated.

Crane uses this isolation to create a background for examining the moral dealings of individual people as well as social and religious institutions. A major emphasis is the ever increasing separation of people living in the Bowery from the common humanity and the resulting decline of morality. Societal isolation will be shown in the relationship of the Bowery to the more affluent areas of New York. Personal isolation will be illustrated by Maggie's separation from her family.

The decline of morality in both the Bowery as a whole and in Maggie will be presented as the responsibility of that portion of society that has rejected them.

The Bowery and Maggie are treated as innocent victims.

The characters' anger toward the larger society is generally vented on each other and against their own property. Thus the anger is useless at best and more often hurtful to innocent people. Crane does not hold the characters in contempt for falling into the common slum traps of thievery, prostitution, and other sins.

However, he also does not forgive his characters (of all economic levels) for their ill use of each other. Therefore the story is more than simply a rebuke of the middle and upper classes; it is also a rebuke of all cruelty. Crane wants us to see and understand the effect of personal inaction and lack of care for others. He focuses specifically on the clergy. He sets up a contrast between religion as taught in Sunday school and as he sees it in practice, discussing personal morality and true religion by focusing on the actions of individual clergymen rather than denominations or groups.

Additionally, Crane uses each of his five principal characters to represent a type of common moral problem. The mother (Mary Johnson) represents selfindulgent pity and domestic violence. She is most often seen drunk and abusive toward her husband and

children. The unnamed father (Mary's husband) is also physically violent, but he more closely represents cowardice and abandonment.

He cannot stand up to his wife and usually leaves when she is angry. He thus leaves the children open to her physical and verbal abuse; he will eventually abandon the family. Their son Jimmie represents cynicism and ignorance. Jimmie has chosen to be cynical, to refuse to believe in anything, trust anyone, or in any way let down his guard; thus Jimmie is deceived repeatedly. Jimmie inherits his parents' vices of drinking and fighting.

These Crane forgives as sins that are forced on Jimmie by society, but when Jimmie becomes hypocritical Crane does not forgive. Crane will punish Jimmie by leaving him without friend or family, and use him as a symbol of the Bowery as a whole. Thus the Bowery residents deserve compassion for the sins forced upon them by larger society, but must also be held responsible for their own plight. Crane, throughout his writings, was very sensitive to hypocrisy, regarding it as an extremely destructive force both personally and socially.

Pete (Jimmie's friend) represents a deceitful user. He will put up whatever front is necessary to gain his ends and will leave when he is satisfied or changes his goals. Daughter Maggie is the single character typecast positively. She represents hope, concern for others, and a desire to improve. Crane presents her suicide as a positive moral act. Maggie is injured by all of humanity through rejection, she is pushed into an immoral life, and she shows great morality by rejecting that life.

Maggie, once she was known as a fallen woman, was not allowed any opportunities to marry or even work at a regular job. Thus in order to live she would be forced to earn her living as a prostitute.

Believing that she is living an immoral life, and having been rejected by family, friends, and the pious community, she looks to the only way out of her immorality. By committing suicide, she demonstrates that she refuses to be a sinner.

The irony and tragedy, of course, is that the hypocritical world has forced her to a death that she probably did not deserve.

Techniques

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is considered a classic example of American naturalism.

Naturalist philosophy held that people are trapped by their environment and are powerless to change it. Naturalist writers attempt to imitate the language, actions, and thoughts of real people. As much as possible Crane wants us to believe that we are listening to the residents of the Bowery, not reading an author's work.

Drawing from his own experiences in the Bowery, Crane writes about family life, interpersonal relationships, method of settling disputes, and entertainment choices.

He has his characters totally controlled by circumstances. They speak, act, think, and live based on the mores of the slums.

Maggie's suicide is the closest Crane allows any of his characters to come to controlling their own destiny. Even Maggie is forced toward her end by the circumstances of her life. Crane presents the story with little explanation or discussion thereby forcing the reader to accept the circumstances and make judgments based on his view of slum reality. Some critics have seen Maggie as paralleling a Greek tragedy in its inevitability.

To strengthen this inevitability Crane uses a very matter-of-fact tone to tell the story of the lives of Maggie Johnson and her family. This approach and the forced simplicity of the story have the effect of letting his real concerns be visible. Crane was using Maggie as sharp criticism of the social and religious organizations of his day. A more complex look at the events in Maggie would obscure his intended criticism in that no group of people are homogeneous or totally predictable, and not all social service agencies operate with the disregard of humans as Crane's institutions.

Some 1896 critics attacked Crane because they believed his views of society distanced readers too far from the char acters. It is true that readers feel very little concern for and never a closeness to any character. Instead, readers are asked to recognize their indifference toward the characters' and their problems, and to confront the fact that indifference is part of the reason for the condition of the downtrodden. Crane underscores these feelings by having a minister work in the center of the slum in a soup kitchen but be completely unable to understand the thinking or problems of the people who come for food. The minister blames their poverty and social degradation on them.

He threatens them with hell and damnation if they do not change their ways without ever offering a path for change.

We also feel his physical avoidance, as when he refuses to allow Maggie to touch his cloak. This avoidance is precisely the attitude Crane appears to have desired.

We are compelled to be voyeurs of the characters' problems and downfall without feeling great pity or desiring to step in. We are allowed the safety of our emotional distance to talk about the problems of the slums without doing anything.

Most critics of Crane's day missed or chose to ignore this societal rebuke. They preferred to deal with the overuse of the naturalistic technique.

Crane's use of biblical allusion is quite intentional. Crane was raised in a family with several ministers, including his father; his mother was an active member of the women's auxiliary. So biblical parable, quotations, and allusions were a natural part of Crane's education. In his early writings Crane frequently drew parallels between the Bible and modern life. For example, the minister refuses to allow Maggie to touch his cloak, in direct contrast to the people who touched Jesus's cloak—knowing that they could draw virtue from Christ. Jesus, being aware of the people's need to touch him, healed all those who sought His power, even though He was criticized for associating with prostitutes and other sinners. The minister refuses even to show Maggie a virtuous path because he thinks he will lose his own "virtue" by associating with her.

Crane focuses a large portion of Maggie in the Johnson's home. This is an excellent method for illustrating the closed society that excludes people. The people being excluded vary depending on their relative weakness to the controlling society. The parents begin the story in total physical and emotional control of the children, but have a constant battle between themselves to see which one will dominate the other. After the father leaves and the surviving children grow up, the power balance becomes more problematical.

Crane uses slum life to illustrate the struggle for power in all levels of society.

The story opens with Jimmie, as a little boy, involved in a fight between neighborhood gangs. The fight is broken up by a larger ,boy (Pete), who uses his power not for the good of the children, but to see Jimmie fight one on one. This second fight is broken up by Jimmie's father who declares his intention of beating Jimmie for fighting. The mother does beat Jimmie for fighting, but only because he has torn his shirt. All of the actions of all the characters appear to be motivated by selfinterest, expediency, ignorance, and the desire to assert the power and control over others. The least obvious, but nonetheless self-serving, is the father. For his own comfort he abandons the family; he is no longer available to pull Jimmie out of fights, to protect the children from Mary, to provide the sustenance of the family. If we cast greater New York in the role of the father, we can clearly hear Crane saying that the city should be protecting the Bowery from the problems of poverty.

Crane has put us in the middle of a bleak situation and demands that we simply look at it. After setting up a very dull canvas, he liberally splashes colorful words. Crane may have used this technique because one of his sisters, an artist, taught him a great deal about the power of color. Critics have compared his writing to the Impressionist painters. Just as the Impressionists used light and dark colors to give the "impression" rather

than a representation of an image, Crane sets a dark background then splashes it with colorful, exciting words to illustrate the minds of the people in the Bowery.

In Maggie, the mother is normally a rough yellow and becomes red or blotched when drinking, the dead Tommie has waxy white hands, the characters issue crimson oaths, Maggie "blossomed in a mud-puddle." This technique is effective in that the reader's attention is drawn to a recognition of the ugliness, the powerlessness, the areas where the characters place value, and the occasional points of hope.

One of the subtler techniques Crane uses is ironic and bitter satiric humor.

Maggie herself is the subject of the bulk of this humor. She has grown up hearing and fearing crimson curses, therefore a portion of her seduction lies in her belief that Pete's cursing is powerful and wonderful. His curses, unlike her mother's, are never directed at her. Rather they are directed at people that annoy Pete. Maggie, not being threatened by the curses, is able to hear and enjoy their color and power. However, she is unable to understand the purpose of cursing and that cursing is not the only way to express feelings.

Maggie wants culture and style but has no idea what either of these qualities are.

She accepts beer gardens, zoos, and a single trip to the museum as culture. She is unable to see any difference between the three places. Maggie also fails to recognize that after Pete has seduced her he takes her to beer gardens of poorer and poorer reputation with increasingly sleazy acts and clientele. It is at a very low quality beer garden that Pete finally abandons her. This decline in the quality of the beer gardens mirrors the decline in Maggie's reputation and circumstances.

First her family's fighting drives her into the arms of the man that "appears like a knight" but who seduces her. When the neighbors laugh about her immorality, Jimmie decides to fight Pete over her honor. Jimmie lose the fight, probably because he has ruined and abandoned a girl himself. (Here is another example of Crane showing the characters to be controlled by their societal morality. Jimmie and Pete do the same things and are only annoyed when it affects them. Jimmie then agrees with his mother that they must kick Maggie out of the apartment because their reputation is besmirched by her immorality. Pete refuses to take her in and the hypocrisy of the Johnson family and Pete creates pity for Maggie. How ever, she has to be totally abandoned, then destroyed in order to raise pity.

Since Maggie represents hope for the people who live in the slums, the irony is palpable. It is totally ironic that if Maggie represents hope, potential help from the outside is delayed until all hope is dead.

A further twist of irony is the fact that having raised pity for Maggie, Crane then does nothing with her. She is briefly heard from again as she tries to find a date for the night, tries to elicit help from and is rejected by the clergy (also by the more affluent members of society), and finally commits suicide. At no point does anyone move from pity to

action. Crane has set up the parallel between Maggie and the Bowery; Maggie (symbolic of the slums) is not saved, simply pitied.

Crane earned his living as a journalist, and he tended to write in a journalistic style, which helps explain why he tells Maggie's story in a series of vignettes.

Each scene could well have been a news story. The journalistic style is both a weakness and a strength: the characters rarely speak, feel, or express emotions, which makes them seem less than real or sympathetic. However, this distancing causes the story to focus on the conditions of the poor rather than their personalities, and gives the appearance of objective observation rather than emotional invovlement.

Thematic Overview

By setting the entire story within the confines of the Bowery, having the Johnson parental behavior passed on to Jimmie, having Pete able to brag about his conquests, and offering numerous other instances of repeated or forced behavior, Crane argues that all the people of the slums are victims; they are trapped by their circumstances and therefore unable to change. Their behaviors are to be treated as symptomatic of living in the slums. This controlling environment argument was popular with the ministers and social reformers of Crane's day.

Crane, however, also uses almost all of his characters to counter this argument.

He shows them to be motivated by selfish desires and demanding of others to meet their needs. Mary Johnson chooses to drink excessively, be physically and verbally abusive toward her family, and destroy the work of others. She is angry and makes everyone around her pay for this anger. Jimmie takes on the negative behaviors of his parents and uses them constantly to get his way. He seduces at least one girl, pushes Maggie into a job in a sweat shop, and he demands all other people yield to his whims. Pete dates Maggie and is upset that she will not kiss him after he spent money on her. Pete makes up his mind to have sex with Maggie almost as punishment for her refusal to kiss him, and carefully lays a plan for seduction. He finds out what Maggie desires out of life and gives her glimpses of her dreams. She naively begins to believe that Pete wants the same things she does and will stand by her. With the seduction accomplished, he tires of Maggie and abandons her. Symbolically, Maggie represents the hopes of people in the Bowery while Pete represents the repression inflicted on the Bowery by more affluent elements in New York City.

To set a contrast Maggie is shown as caring about her younger brothers by trying to help them when Mary beats them. She also attempts to decorate the flat so that it might look better than the average slum tenement. Crane has Maggie thwarted by her family multiple times so that her decision to live with Pete is understandable. She is victimized by her family since they offer her no hope and will not allow her to improve even minimally. Maggie is naive, probably more naive than is believable, so that we can see both a generous spirit and true victimization. She wants to improve her life, and she wants someone to love her and be loved by her. These qualities are hardly unique to the slums, but Crane is building a victim argument to show how she is rejected by all levels of society and forced into prostitution.

Themes

Poverty

The impetus for the misery the characters endure in the novel is the abject state of poverty in which they live. Their tenement is inhabited by "true assassins" who prey on anyone in their path. Nearby "a worm of yellow convicts . . . [crawl] slowly along the river's bank." The Johnsons' building "quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels." In this atmosphere, children like Maggie's younger brother Tommie die. Family life is destroyed as Mr. And Mrs. Johnson drink themselves into oblivion to escape the reality of their lives and then take their drunken wrath out on their children. The streets become schoolyards where Jimmie and his friends learn how to foster within themselves the brutality they must endure. Maggie's dreams of escaping her impoverished existence lead her to the mind-numbing work at the collar and cuff factory and eventually to Pete. When Pete and her family reject her, she is forced to prostitute herself in order to survive.

Hypocrisy

The atmosphere of the novel breeds a moral hypocrisy as the characters struggle to justify their own immoral actions. Mr. Johnson yells at his wife to stop always "poundin' a kid" after he has just savagely kicked Jimmie in an attempt to break up the street fight. Mrs. Johnson, who is more brutal to her children than her husband, declares Maggie to be a disgrace to the family and questions "who would t'ink such a bad girl could grow up in our fambly." Jimmie, who has abandoned many young women in the same manner as Pete has done with Maggie, declares that he will kill Pete for his treatment of her. Yet, he wonders only "vaguely" whether "some of the women of his acquaintance had brothers. Nevertheless, his mind did not for an instant confuse himself with those brothers nor his sister with theirs."

A subtle social hypocrisy is revealed in Maggie's relationship with Pete. Survival for men in this atmosphere depends on them gaining an exaggerated sense of their own superiority coupled with an attitude of complete independence. That avenue is not open for women like Maggie, whose only escape is through utter dependence on a man. Ironically, when she adopts the illusory vision that Pete promotes, she loses her own sense of herself and as a result reduces her standing in Pete's eyes. When her family turns her out because of the neighborhood's condemnation of her relationship with Pete, she is forced to become what they insist she already is and always has been. Her inability to endure this life prompts her to commit suicide.

Alcoholism

From the start to the end, the use and abuse of alcohol is prevalent. Both the mother and father drink heavily to the point of passing out. These parental role models do not

do anything about breaking the cycle of alcoholism in their family. In fact, their weakness to turn to alcohol during times of trouble only encourages and teaches Jimmie and Maggie to turn to it as well. The author never explicitly states whether Maggie ever gets drunk, but he mentions Jimmie's return home in a drunken state on numerous occasions. Maggie does drink beer and cocktails when she is out with Pete.

For much of the story, Maggie is the enabler to her mother's drinking problem. Through her desire to pick up the house and put it back together after her mother breaks the furniture, Maggie enables her mother's vicious cycle by not trying to get her to stop drinking. Maggie lacks self-confidence and does not feel strong enough to stand up to her family. Instead, Maggie silently attempts to get the house back to "normal" after an episode.

Pete acquires many bad traits from his father, one of which is his abuse of alcohol. Despite obtaining a job and earning good money from it, Pete chooses to live the same life that he knew growing up. His father worked. His father went to the bars and drank. Then, Pete's father comes home drunk, and the next day he is the same. Pete adopts that same style of living and habits as his father and visits the bars frequently, returning home drunk often.

Mary's problem with alcohol goes further than coming home stumbling drunk. Mary spends quite a bit of time in and out of jail because of her drinking problem. When Mary drinks, she drinks to get drunk. When Mary is drunk, her rage and fury are unleashed, and the result is a confrontation. Usually, Mary gets kicked out of the bar and arrested by the police. After Maggie's death, Mary's drinking gets worse, and she finds herself in jail even more.

Alcohol plays an important part in the transformation of the characters' lives in the story. Alcohol abuse prevents the characters from developing good relationships with each other. The reader may question what their lives would have been like had the characters not had such a problem with alcohol.

Slum Life

Life on the streets is definitely tough as described in the story. The characters live in a section of New York City surrounded by tenement housing. The sanitation is often poor. Security and comfort are minimal. The residents are very poor and usually lead lives filled with despair and violence.

The residents of these housing areas live there because the rent is cheap, and they have no or little money to live elsewhere. The residents are often uneducated and go to work in factories for little pay. These families often have many children because they do not practice birth control and just live their lives one day at a time. Because of a lack of education, these residents are not goal setters, nor do they attempt to make their lives better. In fact, most turn to abusing alcohol and drugs. In this story, the drug of choice is alcohol. With the regular consumption of alcohol, the residents throw what money they

do have away on getting drunk. Getting drunk plays into the downward spiral of their fortunes as they constantly make bad choices. The more they drink, the tougher they make their lives. Instead of making good choices, they allow the alcohol to numb them.

Power

Shown in the first chapter when the boys are fighting, power is evident throughout the story. In the opening scene, the boys are fighting over a form of power: which neighborhood group of boys is better or stronger. Their pursuit of power leads them into a street fight, which is broken up by the use of superior power. Pete walks up and shows his stuff on one of the little boys, and shortly, all the boys retreat. Power is again illustrated when Jimmie and one of the kids in his group, Blue Billie, start fighting because Jimmie is upset that Blue Billie didn't hold his own during the fight with the Devil's Row group. When Jimmie's dad appears, the boys in the circle see him coming and immediately they recognize the power of an adult. Jimmie and Blue Billie realize it only after Ol' Man Johnson begins kicking at the two boys as they struggle to punch each other. Jimmie realizes the power his father has over him as he walks behind him, humiliated.

Power is also demonstrated in the relationship of Pete and Maggie. Fleeing from the problems within her home, Maggie begins to see Pete in a new light. Maggie is easily impressed by Pete's attention to his personal appearance. Pete wears a collection of fine clothing and always "dresses to impress." Pete notices the newly developed physique of Maggie, and soon they begin to date. As Pete shows Maggie more new things, she leans on him more and more. Her mindset shifts from being submissive to her mother to being submissive to Pete. For example, on one evening, Maggie is sitting at the table with Pete, and it appears as if she is waiting and "fearing his anger or displeasure."

In the end, power is illustrated not with the man attempting to prove it but with his companion's actions. As Pete drinks himself into oblivion and passes out at the table, all the girls get up from the table and leave him. Nellie is the last to leave him because she is busy collecting the bills he leaves behind. Nellie takes them and puts them in her pocket with a parting comment of "What a fool!" Drunk, passed out, and alone, Pete is now powerless.

Style

Structure

Colvert writes that in the novel, Crane "eschewed the conventional plot, shifting the focus from the drama of external event or situation to the drama of thought and feeling in the mental life of his subjects." There are important events in the story, usually marked by their violence, but they serve mainly as a catalyst for the characters' internal responses, which adroitly focus the narrative on the effect the environment has on them. For example, few details are given of Jimmie's fight with the neighboring gang, while more time is spent detailing the animalistic rage he feels coupled with a sense of heroism. A few sentences provide a description of what Maggie sees on stage, but her response to it mingled with her feelings toward Pete, reveal Crane's ironic depiction of the tension between illusion and reality.

Imagery

Crane's use of imagery reinforces the novel's themes. His focus on the illusory and fragile world his characters inhabit is symbolized in Pete's saloon by "a shining bar of counterfeit massiveness" and the mirrored walls that multiply the "pyramids of shimmering glasses" lined up on the shelves. During Jimmie and Pete's fight in the saloon, the mirrors "splintered to nothing" along with Maggie's dreams of escape. The tenement becomes filled with images that reflect its danger and brutality. "A dozen gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the street and gutter" while "withered persons . . . sat smoking pipes in obscure corners." Colvert notes that these images prompted Frank Norris in his review of the novel to write that the picture Crane makes is not "a single carefully composed painting, serious, finished, scrupulously studied, but rather scores and scores of tiny flashlight photographs, instantaneous, caught, as it were, on the run."

Points of View

A narrator tells the story using a third-person point of view. Sometimes, the narrator uses conversations between characters to describe their thoughts and feelings, but most of the time the writer wraps these descriptions up in third-person statements. An example is the description the author gives in Chapter 13 of the waiter's attitude toward Pete in his drunken state.

The author also uses quick prose instead to identify gaps in time. This style provides the reader with additional background information to process what events have transpired in the story in between the chapters. Without it, the reader cannot fully understand the new period of time or events that are transpiring.

By using the third-person viewpoint, the writer is able to describe the progression of events objectively among the characters in the story. Without this objectivity, the story would not have the appeal it does. It could sound like whining if Mary or Maggie told the story. If Jimmie told it, it would have taken on a more arrogant approach. Because of the author's writing style, the story unfolds naturally.

Setting

The story takes place in the slums of New York City. The cobblestone streets, horse-drawn carriages and trucks, and the outdated language describe a period during the 19th century. The reader is able to discern quickly the location as being set in a large city because of the slum neighborhood and the tenement housing. The writer describes an experience of the old woman who was begging on Fifth Avenue that provides more detail of the city in which the story takes place. The tenement building houses the Johnson family, and the entrance is repeatedly described as "the gruesome doorway."

The street is the setting in which much of the action takes place, not only literally but figuratively as well. The opening scene takes place in the streets, and Maggie turns to the streets after her family rejects her because of her "wayward" ways.

Quite often Pete takes Maggie to music halls and theaters, so these places become important in the story. For Maggie, they are places she has never been before. For Pete, it is where his presence is regular. These places depict the lifestyles of people who have extra money to spend on entertainment. It also touches on the prostitution going on near these places.

Language and Meaning

Because the story takes place in the late 19th century, much of the language is archaic. The reader may have to look up some of the language in the dictionary to understand fully what the writer is trying to portray.

With the characters in the story living at or below the poverty level, their language reflects their reduced stations. The words and phrases they use are often contemporary slang or street language and usually a variation of the root word. For example, in the sentence "Youse allus fightin', Jimmie, an' yeh knows it puts mudder out when yehs come home half dead, an' it's like we'll all get a poundin'." The translation is, "You are always fighting Jimmie. You know that upsets your mother when you come home hurt. Now, we'll all suffer."

The characters are immigrants because the dialects are evident in their conversations. For example, references to "we blokies..." and "most of them of foreign birth" support this. Most immigrants emigrated from their home countries in search of prosperity in America. Arriving with nothing, they are able to find residences in these slum sections of the city.

Structure

The story has 19 chapters, most of which describe just one setting. The chapters are noted with Roman numerals, which were customary at the time. There are no chapter titles to offer clues to the contents of the chapter ahead. Sometimes, the chapter ends, and a new chapter begins where the previous chapter left off. At other times, the next chapter starts after an extensive period in which the author addresses the first few paragraphs in the chapter.

The story is written in chronological order starting with Maggie and Jimmie's early childhood and ends with Mary's wailing cries of forgiveness for her dead daughter. The writer presents the lives of those who live in poverty and on the street. It chronicles their lives as they grow up. While the mistakes the characters make are obvious to an outsider, they would not be so for the characters in the story.

Historical Context

Naturalism

Naturalism is the name of a literary movement that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in France, England, and the United States. Writers included in this group, like Stephen Crane, Emile Zola, and Theodore Dreiser, described in their works a biological and/or environmental determinism that prevented their characters from exercising their free will and thus controlling their fates. Crane often focused on the social and economic factors that overpowered his characters. Zola's and Dreiser's works include this type of environmental determinism coupled with an exploration of the influences of heredity in their portraits of the animalistic nature of men and women engaged in the endless and brutal struggle for survival.

Irish Immigration

Thousands of Irish men and women immigrated to the United States during the nineteenth century to escape the hardships of their native land. America became a dream for these people who fled poverty and disease as well as English oppression as they packed themselves tightly into ships, referred to as coffin ships due to the harsh living conditions on board, heading for their new home. Being in the United States, however, would hardly live up to their vision of the good life. Most settled in their arrival ports and were soon herded into the city's tenement sections, where they had little chance of escape. Each major city, including New York, had its Irish section or shantytown where, due to the prejudice against them, immigrants were confined to cellars and shacks. Ridiculed for their dress and their accents and blamed for increases in the crime rate, they were often greeted with "No Irish Need Apply" signs when they looked for employment.

A Woman's Place

At the close of the nineteenth century, feminist thinkers began to engage in a rigorous investigation of female identity as it related to all aspects of a woman's life. Any woman who questioned traditional female roles was tagged a "New Woman," a term attributed to novelist Sarah Grand, whose 1894 article in the *North American Review* identified an emergent group of women, influenced by J. S. Mill and other champions of individualism, who supported and campaigned for women's rights.

Many women insisted that marriage and motherhood should not be the only choices available to women. The more conservative feminists of this age considered marriage and motherhood acceptable roles only if guidelines were set in order to prevent a woman from assuming an inferior position to her husband in any area of their life together. This group felt that a woman granted equality in marriage would serve as an exemplary role model for her children by encouraging the development of an

independent spirit. Women, however, especially in lower socio-economic classes, found it almost impossible to break away from traditional female roles until the second wave feminist movement in the 1970s.

Critical Overview

After completing *Maggie* when he was twenty-two, Crane had the novel published privately under the pseudonym Johnston Smith in 1893. This version caught the eye of literary critics Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells, who championed it and eventually, after its rejection by *The Century Magazine*, convinced D. Appleton and Company to publish the novel in 1896. *Maggie* did not gain much success with the reading public, however, until Crane toned down the more violent scenes in the revised 1896 version.

Theodore Dreiser, in a letter to Max J. Herzberg, printed in the *Michigan Daily Sunday Magazine*, declared *Maggie* to "bear all the marks of a keen and unblessed sympathy with life, as well as a high level of literary perception." He concluded that Crane was "one of the few writers who stood forward intellectually and artistically at a time when this nation was as thoroughly submerged in romance and sentimentality and business as it is today." In a 1922 piece on Crane printed in *Friday Nights: Literary Criticism and Appreciation*, Edward Garnett described the novel as a "little masterpiece" in its "remorseless study of New York slum and Bowery morals." Garnett insisted *Maggie* is not "a story *about* people; it is primitive human nature itself set down with perfect spontaneity and grace of handling." He found the "aesthetic beauty" of the work unsurpassed.

The support of Dreiser and Garnett, along with that of Amy Lowell and Willa Cather, helped rediscover Crane and *Maggie* in the 1920s. In the early 2000s, the novel is regarded as one of the finest examples of American literary naturalism.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Perkins is a professor of English at Prince George's Community College in Maryland and has published articles on several twentieth-century authors. In this essay, Perkins examines Crane's exploration of the naturalistic themes in Maggie*.*

[The wind-tower] was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree . . . the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual□nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, not beneficent, not treacherous, not wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent."

This famous passage from Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat," which focuses on four men in a small dinghy struggling against the current to make it to shore, is often quoted as an apt expression of the tenets of naturalism, a literary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in France, the United States, and England. Naturalist writers like Crane, Emile Zola, and Theodore Dreiser argued in their works that human destiny is controlled by biological and/or environmental factors. Their characters enjoy no free will as they struggle to survive their often brutal lives. As in "The Open Boat," in his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Crane examines naturalistic tendencies in the harsh lives of the novel's main characters. Their fate, however, is not determined by natural forces. Through his story of a young Bowery woman's experiences within a destructive and indifferent social environment, Crane raises important questions about endurance and survival.

Crane wrote on early copies of the novel that the story "tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless." He succeeds admirably. Crane's depiction of Maggie's tragedy reveals an ironclad biological as well as environmental determinism, as is noted by Edward Garnett, in an essay on Crane. Garnet writes that the characters' "human nature responds inexorably to their brutal environment" and concludes "the curious habits and code of the most primitive savage tribes could not be presented with a more impartial exactness, or with more sympathetic understanding."

The biological forces that shape the characters' destinies emerge in their adaptive response to their harsh environment. The novel opens with an apt illustration of this cause and effect relationship in the description of Maggie's brother Jimmie, who is engaged in a fight with the neighborhood boys. Street fighting was commonplace in the Bowery at the end of the nineteenth century, as one gang of boys would battle another for a dominant position in the neighborhood. Boys like Jimmie joined gangs for a sense of belonging and protection. Ironically, though, in the opening scene, Jimmie's friends have abandoned him, and as a result, he is being brutally beaten by a rival gang. His instincts for survival take over as he does anything he can to defend himself. The "fury of the battle" turns him into "a tiny, insane demon" as he uses every method available to fend off his attackers.

Jimmie's fists, however, are not the only tools he employs to survive his savage environment. In order to endure the beatings doled out by his parents as well as the neighborhood children and the devastating, abject poverty of the tenements, Jimmie along with his sister Maggie must invent comforting illusions. Jimmie survives because he creates a vision of himself as a god within the neighborhood, vastly superior to all the other inhabitants. This vision begins to take shape from an early age, when Jimmie has dreams of becoming "some vague soldier, or a man of blood with a sort of sublime license." His false sense of the heroic is reflected in the opening scene when Jimmie stands "upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley."

Later, when he gains employment in the city as a truck driver, he determines that only he has "the unalienable right to stand in the proper path of the sun chariot." As he drives through the streets, he wonders at the inhabitants' "insane disregard for their legs and his convenience." His sense of superiority causes him to encase his soul in armor as he sneers at the world and becomes "so sharp that he believed in nothing."

Jimmie's friend Pete has adopted a similar sense of grandeur, which has not only helped him survive the mean streets of the Bowery; it also has earned him a respectable position as a bartender. Pete's "mannerisms stamped him as a man who had a correct sense of his personal superiority." James B. Colvert, in his article on Crane for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, writes that "the swaggering Pete and Jimmie apprehend a world of menace which challenges their assumptions about their special virtues and their dreams of heroic destinies." As a result they must cover themselves in an armor of scorn, as is indicated by Pete's assumption that "he had certainly seen everything and with each curl of his lip, he declared that it amounted to nothing."

Pete's superior sense of himself and his nonchalant disregard of his surroundings causes Maggie to deem him "the ideal man." Unfortunately for her, however, Pete does not live up to these expectations. In her relationship with Pete, Maggie adopts a similar defense mechanism, as does Pete and her brother□the creation of comforting illusions. Her fantasies, however, do not involve an exaggerated sense of self; they revolve around her distorted vision of Pete, who proves himself to be as morally bankrupt as others in Maggie's world. Ironically, while Pete's illusory vision of himself enables him to survive his harsh world, Maggie's embracement of that same vision eventually destroys her.

Maggie's desperate need to escape the brutality of her family life and the monotony of her position at the collar and cuff factory becomes apparent at the theater, which she frequents with Pete. There, she is transported by "plays in which the dazzling heroine was rescued from the palatial home of her treacherous guardian by the hero with the beautiful sentiments." These melodramas, with their "pale-green snow-storms," "nickel-plated revolvers," and daring rescues, are "transcendental realism," removing her from the sordid reality of her own life. Pete gains so much power over Maggie because he becomes her method of transport to this charming and safe world, where "the poor and virtuous eventually overcame the wealthy and wicked."

After her mother throws her out in response to Maggie's relationship with Pete, Maggie becomes completely dependent on him, a situation reinforced by her illusory vision of him as "a golden sun." In his rarefied presence, she feels "small and mouse-colored" as she "beseeches tenderness of him." Soon, her "air of spaniel-like dependence" becomes magnified and shows its "direct effect in the peculiar off-handedness and ease of Pete's ways toward her." Pete inevitably is drawn to Nellie, a woman of "brilliance and audacity," more fitting, he assumes, to a man of his stature. When Nellie joins Pete and Maggie at the club, Pete's "eyes sparkle" and Maggie is ignored by all.

Pete's ultimate rejection of Maggie results in her ruination. Her vision of her necessary escape from her brutal life has been dependent on a rescue by this "ideal man," and when that vision is shattered, "her soul could never smile again." Her devotion to Pete, which prompted her to disregard her reputation, has stripped her of her physical as well as her emotional shelter when her mother refuses to allow her back into her home.

Crane's focus on the tension between illusion and reality in *Maggie* provides an adeptly ironic vision of the naturalistic world of the Bowery. Colvert quotes Crane's declaration in 1896, "I do not think much can be done with the Bowery as long as the people there are in their present state of conceit." Colvert concludes that Crane's "stinging verbal irony constantly chastises" the novel's characters "for their moral blindness, which clearly is caused by their absurd and self-indulgent illusions about their world and themselves." Crane's artistry also inspires our sympathy for Maggie, whose innocence is destroyed by the disease of poverty and the moral vacuity that surrounds her.

Source: Wendy Perkins, Critical Essay on *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Critical Essay #2

Petruso has a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in screenwriting. In this essay, Petruso compares and contrasts the characters of Maggie, the purported heroine of Crane's novel, and Jimmie, Maggie's brother who also plays a large role in the novel. Both are creatures of the street for different reasons, and their differing sexes and lives result in very different life paths.

In Crane's novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, he writes of circumstances both very familiar to contemporary audiences, but also very specific to his late nineteenth-century readers. Set in a slum in an urban area, the naturalistic novel describes in detail the effect of living there with alcoholic parents, no real direction in life, and many other issues on Maggie, Jimmie, and other young characters. Siblings Maggie and Jimmie seem to be about the same age, and both face many of the same issues. They include how Maggie and Jimmie deal with family life, relationships, sex, employment, and violence. While both face many obstacles in their lives, Jimmie survives and is relatively upright while Maggie's life is more compromised and ends early. The reasons for the difference are complex and often gender specific, but are also revealing and give Crane's story depth.

One of the biggest differences between Jimmie and Maggie is that from the beginning of the novel, when the reader meets Jimmie as a "very little boy," he lives out a masculine role by standing up for himself, often with his fists. In contrast, Maggie is given the female role of caretaker who should be protected by her family, primarily her father and brother but also her mother, but is not. Throughout *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Maggie cares for others, but no one, save Pete, ever shows interest in her until she is forced to live on the streets. Pete, her brother's friend and the man with whom she becomes involved, uses her for a sexual relationship and some standing among other men because of Maggie's comely appearance. But even Pete leaves Maggie when Nell, a somewhat classy prostitute, questions his choice to be with Maggie and convinces him to leave with her (Nell). Maggie, as always, loses, which leads to her ultimate demise.

Jimmie and Maggie have a very difficult home life. Both of their parents are alcoholics who beat them and ignore them, focusing more often on drink than being a parent. Crane draws their mother, named Mary, worse than their father. He holds a job (probably at a factory), while the mother does not really care much for the children. She cooks for the family, at least in the early chapters, but also breaks objects in the kitchen and living area, including cookware, plates, and tables, when drunk. Crane depicts no real concern with their children's welfare, unless it has to do with sexuality and reputation where Maggie is concerned.

After Jimmie and Maggie's father dies, Jimmie soon steps into his role as primary provider and head of the small family. He finds work as a truck driver where he can continue to act as an angry young man. Like his father before him, Jimmie does not protect Maggie. When Pete shows interest, then begins to see his sister, Jimmie becomes upset that the older man has taken advantage of their friendship. Crane writes

at the beginning of chapter ten, "Jimmie had an idea it wasn't common courtesy for a friend to come to one's home and ruin one's sister. But he was not sure how much Pete knew about the rules of politeness." After Maggie leaves the family and lives with Pete, Jimmie follows his mother's lead and condemns her. While Jimmie thinks about killing Pete or bringing harm to him, he does not try to find his sister or convince her to come home. Though Jimmie considers rescuing Maggie in chapter 13, his mother says she will not let her daughter come home. Still, he is conflicted between how it looks to have a sister who has a compromised reputation, and his feeling that his mother might be wrong and he should protect her. In the end, he lives up to the example set by his parents and does nothing for Maggie.

In contrast to her brother, Maggie stays out of the way at home. There is no mention of education for her or her brother, yet she did not play in the streets as her brother did as a child. Maggie tries to help her family, both as a child and as an adult. In chapter two, for example, she performs a simple household task of moving dishes, but when she breaks one, her mother beats her. She often makes an effort to avoid her mother's wrath, as well as her father's anger and, later, her brother's anger, after he takes over as head of the family, but fails on all counts. Maggie is obedient to Jimmie. When her brother takes over as the head of the family, he tells Maggie to take a job. She finds work at a small sweatshop factory making collars and cuffs for clothing. Until she meets Pete, Maggie is most certainly not a girl of the streets.

Despite this kind of family life, Maggie possesses something that Jimmie does not. She is physically attractive. At the beginning of chapter five, Crane describes the young woman: "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl." Pete notices how Maggie looks, which leads to their relationship. He shows an interest in Maggie when no one else has. Because of his interest, Maggie comes to realize that there is more to life than what happens in the family's tenement apartment. Pete takes her to places where she is entertained and amused. Pete is also different than her father and brother in where he works and his outward appearance. Instead of driving a truck, Pete works as a bartender in a local saloon. It is cleaner than any job the men in her family hold, though Pete has to keep order and break up fights.

As soon as Pete enters Maggie's life and Maggie decides that she is attracted to him, her mother belittles her daughter and immediately assumes the worst. In chapter six, before Maggie has even gone out with Pete, her drunk mother accuses her of not coming home from work right away. The mother yells at Maggie, "Why deh hell don' yeh come home earlier? Been loafin"round deh streets. Yer getting' teh be a reg'lar devil." When she leaves with Pete the first time, Crane writes that Maggie's mother "blasphemed and gave her daughter a bad name." Yet Maggie would not even kiss Pete after the first time he took her out.

The turning point in Maggie's family life comes in chapter nine. After her mother comes home drunk and gets into a scuffle with Jimmie, Pete picks up Maggie to take her out. Her mother curses her and tells her to get out and do the things that her mother assumes her daughter will do. Her mother repeats ideas like this over and over again:

"Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs have gone teh deh devil. Yer a disgrace teh yer people, damn yeh." After Maggie has left with Pete, her mother believes she is blameless. She says "When a girl is bringed up deh way I bringed up Maggie, how kin she go teh deh devil?" Her mother believes that Maggie has always been bad, and her brother, perhaps not wanting to argue, agrees at first. He comes to buy into his mother's condemnations himself. Maggie is attacked for bringing shame on the family for her sexual relationship with Pete, though she never speaks one word against her mother or brother at any point in the story.

Thus, there are different standards for sexual relationships for Jimmie and Maggie. Before Maggie even met Pete, the adult Jimmie stayed away from home for days at a time with no real denunciation from his mother. On two occasions in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Jimmie reflects on some of the women he has had sexual relationships with. At least two women have accused him of fathering their children. No one questions what Jimmie does with these women, except himself, and these relationships do not affect his social status in his family or at work. As the situation with Maggie and Pete evolves, Jimmie wonders if the women he has been with have brothers or fathers, and why they have not gone after him for his actions. Crane writes in chapter ten, "He was trying to formulate a theory that he had always unconsciously held, that all sisters, excepting his own, could advisedly be ruined." After Maggie leaves home with Pete, Jimmie does get into a fight with Pete at his bar, though Maggie's name is not mentioned. After the fight with Pete, he does not return home for many days. When he does, his mother is still angry that Maggie has not come home; Jimmie's absence hardly mattered.

Maggie idealizes Pete and believes he can take her away from her empty life. She does not come home after she leaves with him at the end of chapter nine. It is implied that they have a sexual relationship, and Maggie becomes very dependent on him. After a few weeks, when Nell challenges Pete in a public place and he chooses her, Maggie tries to go back home. In chapter 15, Maggie's return to the tenement is unsuccessful. Her mother calls her names, cursing her to hell and condemning her for bringing shame on the family. Jimmie agrees with his mother's statements. The neighbors offer only backhanded support. A lady who lives there offers Maggie a place to stay for the moment. She tells Maggie, "So 'ere yehs are back again, are yehs? An' dey've kicked yehs out? Well, come in an' stay wid me tehnight. I ain' got no moral standin'." Maggie tries to go back to Pete in chapter 16, but he throws her out of his saloon.

Because of the family's and society's condemnations, Maggie finally turns to an unrespectable life on the street, while her brother continues to live his somewhat respectable one with a job and a little responsibility. She takes up a new kind of employment. Maggie becomes a somewhat successful prostitute for several months, and while her clothing is nicer, she ends up serving a customer whom Crane describes in negative terms. This encounter leads directly or indirectly□Crane is obtuse□to Maggie's death. After Maggie has passed away, the other ladies in the tenement convince her mother to forgive her. Jimmie reluctantly claims her body.

Crane depicts the world that Jimmie and Maggie live in as a chaotic disorderly mess, where violence is accepted as a part of every day life. Both Jimmie and his mother have police records, and Jimmie learned from a young age to appreciate the power of violence. Yet, it is the most nonviolent person□rivaled only by Jimmie and Maggie's little brother Tommie who dies as a toddler□who suffers the most. The streets that Jimmie embraced from an early age end up taking the life of his sister, after she spent much of her life avoiding them. Maggie and Jimmie never rise above the circumstances they were born into and the mistakes both made along the way. Crane uses *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* to show how easily both sexes' lives can be wasted in such an environment.

Source: Annette Petruso, Critical Essay on *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Quotes

"Ah, we blokies kin lick d' hull damn Row," said a child, swaggering. Chapter I, p. 129.

"Ah," cried Jimmie, "shut up er I'll smack yer mout'. See?" Chapter 2, p. 131

"...When I come home nights I can't git no rest 'cause yer allus poundin'a kid. Let up, d'yeh hear? Don't be allus poundin' a kid." Chapter 2, p. 132.

"Eh, child, what is it dis time? Is yer fader beatin' yer mudder, or yer mudder beatin' yer fader?" Chapter 2, p. 134.

"My home reg'lar livin' hell! Why do I come an' drink' whisk' her thish way? 'Cause home reg'lar livin' hell!" Chapter 3, p. 135.

"Dat Johnson goil is a putty good looker." Chapter 5, p. 142.

"Say, Mag, I'm stuck on yer shape. It's outa sight," he said, parenthetically, with an affable grin. Chapter 6, p. 144.

"...Why don' yeh come home earlier? Been loafin' 'round d' streets. Yer getting' t' be a regular devil." Chapter 6, p. 147.

"Two beehs!" Chapter 7, p. 148.

"Do dose little men talk?" asked Maggie. Chapter 7, p. 149.

"Wid a home like dis an' a mudder like me, she went t' d'bad." Chapter 13, p. 168

"Keep yer hands off me!" roared his mother again. Chapter 9, p. 156.

"Ah, what's d' use?" he demanded of himself, Chapter 11, p. 165.

"...She abused an' ill-treated her own mudder - her own mudder what loved her, an' she'll never git anodder chance." Chapter 13, p. 170.

Adaptations

A recorded version of the novel *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets and Other New York Stories* was produced in 1997 by the American Library Association.

Topics for Further Study

Why do you think *Maggie* has never been made into a film? What difficulties would a filmmaker face in trying to create a cinematic version of the novel? Try to address these difficulties as you write a script for one scene in *Maggie*.

Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* has been heralded as one of the finest war novels ever written. Although the novel's subject matter is quite different from that of *Maggie*, scholars have found many thematic and stylistic parallels. Read *Red Badge of Courage* and compare its themes and style to those of *Maggie*.

Research Irish immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century, and discuss the difficulties the Irish faced as well as how they were eventually able to establish themselves in America.

Investigate working conditions and regulations in New York City at the end of the nineteenth century, and compare them to working conditions and regulations in New York City today.

Compare and Contrast

Late Nineteenth Century: In 1888, the International Council of Women is founded to mobilize support for the woman's suffrage movement.

Today: Women have made major gains in their fight for equality, although the Equal Rights Amendment Bill that was intended to codify the equality of men and women has yet to be passed. It was introduced to every Congress between 1923 and 1972. In 1972 it was passed and then sent to the states to be ratified, but it failed to gain the approval of the required number of states. It has been introduced to every Congress since 1972.

Late Nineteenth Century: Feminist Victoria Woodhull embarks on a lecture tour in 1871 espousing a free love philosophy, which reflects the women's movement's growing willingness to discuss sexual issues.

Today: Women have the freedom to engage in premarital sex and to have children out of wedlock. The issue of single parenting caused a furor in the early 1990s when then vice president Daniel Quayle criticized the television character Murphy Brown for deciding not to marry her baby's father. In the early 2000s, however, single parenting is more widely accepted.

Late Nineteenth Century: Samuel Langhorne Clemens (also known as Mark Twain) dubs the 1870s "The Gilded Age," due in large part to the industrialization of the West. During this period, a handful of large industries gains control of the economy in the United States. Those industrialists who make profits see their fortunes grow at a rapid rate, while the working class suffers from low wages and dangerous working conditions.

Today: Public awareness of major companies who exploit foreign workers has grown. Many fear that the current push for economic globalization reinforces the imbalances between the rich and the poor.

What Do I Read Next?

The Awakening (1899) is Kate Chopin's novel of a young woman who struggles between the prescribed role of wife and mother and the desire to act independently and inevitably suffers the consequences of trying to establish herself as an independent spirit.

In the play *A Doll's House* (1879), Henrik Ibsen examines a woman's child-like role as wife and mother in the nineteenth century and the disastrous effects those limitations have on her marriage when she attempts to help her husband.

Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" (1898) depicts the struggles of four shipwrecked seamen to reach shore.

George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898) focuses on a daughter who struggles to deal with her discovery that her mother has been running successful brothels, the source of her family's income.

Key Questions

Discussion of Maggie could easily begin with an examination of the relationship between a person's environment and the circumstances of his/her life. Looking at this relationship in novels like Gone with the Wind (Margaret Mitchell, 1936; see separate entry), we can see different groups of people separated by wealth and power. These groups all define freedom as non-slavery, yet Scarlett O'Hara is in some ways trapped by her circumstances (gender, the amount and form of education she was allowed, and societal expectations of her behavior). Shakespeare deals with this argument extensively in Hamlet (1602), as does Victor Hugo (a contemporary of Crane) in Les Miserables (1862). Mitchell, Shakespeare, and Hugo offer a variety of views on the power of environment and circumstances.

1. At what points are Jimmie and Maggie exposed to circumstances and environments other than the Bowery? How do these exposures affect them?

2. To what extent are Jimmie and Maggie trapped? Could they have helped themselves?

3. How could the larger society have helped the Bowery?

4. Research and discuss the literary movement naturalism.

5. Compare Maggie and Henry Fleming to Scarlett O'Hara. In what ways do they understand and attempt to control their environment? In what ways are they controlled by their environment?

Literary Precedents

Framing discussions of morality in slum settings was very popular in the late 1800s. Many authors sought to make morality plays out of poverty living.

Other authors sought to stir the social conscience of the more affluent society to improve living conditions in the slums.

The Frenchman, Emile Zola, is often credited as the first important Naturalist writer, publishing L'Assommoir in the 1870s. Although there is no evidence that Crane had read Zola, the story lines between L'Assowmoirand Maggie are similiar.

A more likely source for Crane would have been the very popular sermons, published in all of the New York papers, by Thomas DeWitt Talmage. They covered the vices of drinking (the Johnson parents' problem passed down to Jimmie), the dissolute dance (the ever sleazier beer gardens), and the sweat shops (Maggie's sewing factory). In Talmage's sermons the vices are terrible but the lack of mercy toward the unfortunates, particularly prostitutes, was by far worse. Crane's Maggie repeats this argument.

Additional stimulus for Crane could very easily have come from three sources located even closer to home. First, the most probable source was Crane's father's sermons. Jonathan Crane, a Methodist minister with inner city parishes, died when Stephen was eight years old. However, Stephen revered his father and saved all of his writings. Stephen even took these works with him to England in 1900. Secondly, Stephen's mother was also a tireless Methodist writer whose subjects were temperance and mercy. She took Stephen to many Methodist revivals and organizational meetings. Finally, Crane formed a friendship with the social reformer Jacob Riis, the author of How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York (1890). From Crane's correspondence it is clear that he attended some of the lectures and spent a great deal of time with Riis.

While neither the conventions nor the plot is particularly original to Crane, Maggie does represent one of the first American naturalistic novels. Published during the glorious decade in New York City, the 1890s, when the United States was about to emerge as the world's most prosperous and influential nation, Maggie reflected the dark interior of our industrial society and was the first American novel to anticipate the underclass that would haunt the nation a century later.

Further Study

Howard, Jane, *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*, University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Howard discusses *Maggie* and other naturalist works in context.

Nagel, James, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980.

Nagel examines aspects of this literary school in Crane's work alongside the traditional focus on naturalistic elements.

Solomon, Eric, *Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism*, Harvard University Press, 1966.

Solomon suggests that Crane parodied conventional literature of the nineteenth century as a means of developing his own fiction.

Stallman, R. W., *Stephen Crane: A Biography*, Brazillier, 1968.

Stallman presents a comprehensive look at Crane's life and work.

Bibliography

Colvert, James B., "Stephen Crane," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 12, *American Realists and Naturalists*, Gale Research, 1982, pp. 100—24.

Dreiser, Theodore, Letter to Max J. Herzberg on November 2, 1921, in the *Michigan Daily Sunday Magazine*, Vol. XXXII, No. 54, November 27, 1921, p. 1.

Garnett, Edward, "Stephen Crane and His Work," in *Friday Nights: Literary Criticism and Appreciations*, Knopf, 1922, pp. 201—17.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Novels for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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