Mammon and the Archer Study Guide

Mammon and the Archer by O. Henry

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Introduction

"Mammon and the Archer," by William Sydney Porter—better known by the pseudonym of O. Henry—was first published in the *New York World* and later published in O. Henry's *The Four Million* in 1906. The title of the collection and the short stories themselves were a response to Ward McAllister's 1892 comment that there are only about four hundred people in New York City, referring only to those whom McAllister thought were of importance. O. Henry's collection, however, concerns the total population of New York City at the time, around four million, not just the aristocratic few. In fact, "Mammon and the Archer," which is considered to be one of O. Henry's best stories, depicts a rich entrepreneur, Anthony Rockwall, who does not belong to this aristocratic four hundred but whose son is trying to marry one of the aristocratic daughters. Anthony believes that money can buy everything and tries to prove it to himself by using his money to stage an elaborate event that helps his son win his bride.

Critics initially praised O. Henry for his stories, many of which featured surprise endings like the one in "Mammon and the Archer." O. Henry's New York stories introduced new character types that helped to shape the image and perceptions of America both at home and abroad. However, while O. Henry's acclaim with popular readers has remained consistent since his death in 1910, many critics have since found fault with O. Henry's techniques, including his formerly praised surprise endings and plot constructions. To this day, O. Henry's literary reputation is in question, although his name still adorns one of the most prestigious short-story contests in the United States: the O. Henry Awards. A current copy of "Mammon and the Archer" can be found in *Tales of O. Henry: Sixty-Two Stories,* which was published by Barnes & Noble Books in 1993.

Author Biography

O. Henry was born as William Sidney (changed to Sydney in 1898) Porter on September 11, 1862, in Greensboro, North Carolina. After his mother died, Porter was raised by his paternal grandmother and his paternal aunt, who helped develop the young author's passion for reading and writing in her private school. Nevertheless, Porter dropped out of school in 1877 at the age of fifteen to work as a pharmacist's assistant. Porter became a licensed pharmacist at nineteen. In 1882, Porter moved to Denison, Texas, where he worked as a ranch hand. This was the first of many locations and experiences that Porter would draw upon later in his short fiction. In 1884, Porter moved to Austin, where he worked as a bookkeeper and draftsman (1884-1891) and as a teller at the First National Bank (1891-1894). In 1887, Porter eloped with Athol Estes.

While working as a teller, Porter began to submit his writing and illustrations to local publications, and in 1894 he began to publish his own weekly newspaper, called the *Rolling Stone.* What happened next is the source of much mystery. What is certain is that, at some point while working at the First National Bank, Porter began altering his accounts, leading to a discrepancy of more than five thousand dollars. Some critics and biographers say that Porter took the money as a temporary loan to support his fledgling newspaper. Others say that he was desperate for money and stole it outright. Porter claimed his innocence to his family and friends but would not speak about the incident in public. In any case, a federal bank examiner discovered the discrepancy during an audit and pursued the case, even though the bank eventually dropped the charges. Porter was arrested in 1896 on charges of embezzlement but fled—first to New Orleans and then to Honduras—before he was supposed to stand trial. He stayed in Central America until January 1897, when he got word that his wife was dying and returned to the United States to be with her.

Porter was convicted in 1898 and sent to the Ohio State Penitentiary, a fact that shamed him greatly. In prison, Porter continued to write and submit stories. With the publication of "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" in *McClure's* in 1899, Porter adopted the now-famous pseudonym, O. Henry, which many believe Porter used to hide his status as a convict. In 1901, after being released from prison early for good behavior, Porter worked briefly in Pittsburgh and then moved to New York City, which he explored endlessly, translating his observations into stories. In 1903, Porter was hired by the *New York World* and soon began publishing one story each week for the newspaper. In 1904, Porter published *Cabbages and Kings,* a series of Central-American stories that he converted into a novel.

However, it was the publication of *The Four Million*—a collection of his New York stories that included "Mammon and the Archer" that secured Porter's fame. Over the next four years, until his death in New York City in 1910, Porter published seven more short-story collections, including *The Gentle Grafter* (1908); *Options* (1909); and *Strictly Business: More Stories of the Four Million* (1910), which was published shortly before his death. Porter had written many more short stories—about two hundred fifty in total—and many of these appeared in new collections in the years following his death.

Plot Summary

O. Henry's "Mammon and the Archer" begins with an example of Anthony Rockwall's unwillingness to accept the limitations of his position. As a self-made millionaire, Rockwall does not belong to the same aristocratic circle as his neighbors, who despise the fact that Anthony lives among them. When Anthony sees one of his neighbors turn his nose up at a renaissance sculpture in front of Anthony's home, Anthony tells himself that he will have his house painted red, white, and blue the following summer, to make his neighbors even more angry at him.

Anthony calls for his son, Richard, and proceeds to ask Richard how much he pays for soap and clothes. Anthony is satisfied with Richard's answers, which show that Richard does not pay as much as the other young, wealthy men in the city. Anthony tells Richard that, due to his money, Richard is a gentleman in one generation, whereas common wisdom has always stated that it takes three generations to make a gentleman. Despite Anthony's belief that money can buy everything, however, Richard says that he is distressed because his father's money cannot buy his way into the aristocracy. Anthony correctly guesses that it is a matter of love and encourages Richard to use his money and position to win the woman's hand in marriage. Richard informs his father that he has missed his chance, since Miss Lantry—the object of his affection—will be leaving the country in two days to live in Europe for two years. In addition, since she is part of the aristocratic social circle, she has a tight social schedule, which leaves no more than a few minutes for her and Richard to talk, while he accompanies her by coach to the theatre. Richard states that this is one situation in which his father's money cannot help him.

Anthony disagrees, however, and says that although money cannot buy enough time to make one live longer, it can be manipulated in certain situations. He is mysterious when he says this, giving no more details about his intentions. Later in the evening, Anthony's sister, Richard's Aunt Ellen, comes to see Anthony. Like Richard, Ellen believes that Anthony's money is useless in this case. The next evening, before Richard is going to leave to pick up Miss Lantry, Ellen gives her nephew a special gold ring. She tells him that the ring is supposed to bring good luck in love and that Richard's mother had entrusted it to her to give to Richard when he found the one he loved. The ring does not fit on any of Richard's fingers, so he puts it in his vest pocket.

Richard picks up Miss Lantry at the train station, as promised, and, following Miss Lantry's request, tells the driver to hurry to the theatre. However, along the way, Richard drops his mother's ring and tells the coachman to stop the cab so that he can get out and retrieve it. While Richard is reclaiming the ring, a sudden flood of traffic renders their cab motionless. Richard is apologetic to Miss Lantry, saying that if he had not dropped the ring, they would not be stuck, but Miss Lantry says she is not interested in the theatre anyway and asks to see the ring.

Later that night, Aunt Ellen comes to Anthony's study, telling him that Anthony and Miss Lantry are engaged and that it was the power of love—as symbolized by the ring that

Richard dropped—that prevailed in the end, not Anthony's money. Anthony ignores this statement and implies that he and his money were involved in helping Richard. Ellen is confused, but Anthony sends her away, not explaining what he means so that he can go back to his story—an adventure story about a pirate whose money-laden ship is sinking.

The next day, a man who goes by the name of Kelly comes to collect money from Anthony. Through their conversation, it is revealed that Anthony hired Kelly to create the traffic jam by paying a number of wagons, cabs, trucks, two-horse teams, motormen, and even police to jam up the street that Richard and Miss Lantry were traveling on. Anthony writes out a check to Kelly and asks him if he happened to see a naked fat boy shooting arrows—a description of Cupid, the Roman god of love. Kelly thinks that Anthony is talking about a crazy person and says that if this boy was on the scene, the police probably arrested him before Kelly arrived. Anthony laughs, thinking that the absence of Cupid proves that money, not love, deserves sole credit for helping Richard to win the hand of Miss Lantry.

Characters

Broher Anthony

See Anthony Rockwall

Aunt Ellen

Aunt Ellen is Anthony Rockwall's sister and Richard Rockwall's aunt. Whereas Anthony believes that money can buy everything, Aunt Ellen does not believe it can buy love. Because of this, she gives Richard a special ring—which Richard's mother had entrusted to her—to help him to be lucky in love. When Richard accidentally drops the ring while he and Miss Lantry are in the coach, it sets the stage for Anthony's planned traffic jam. Since Aunt Ellen does not know about this deception, however, she thinks that the ring—and the love that it symbolizes—deserves all of the credit for giving Richard the time he needed to propose to Miss Lantry.

Kelly

Kelly is a man whom Anthony Rockwall hires to create an elaborate traffic jam so that Richard will get the time he needs to propose to Miss Lantry. Like Anthony, Kelly believes in the power of money, which he uses to pay for the traffic jam.

Miss Lantry

Miss Lantry is the young woman who is the object of Richard Rockwall's affections. Because she comes from an aristocratic family, her schedule— which is planned out very carefully by her family— is very tight, and Richard feels he does not have enough time to propose to her properly. However, when the traffic jam planned by Anthony Rockwall keeps Miss Lantry and Richard confined to their horse-drawn cab for two hours, Richard and Miss Lantry take advantage of the time and get to know each other better. As a result, when Richard proposes in the cab, Miss Lantry accepts.

Anthony Rockwall

Anthony Rockwall is a wealthy, retired soap manufacturer, who believes that money can buy everything; when a traffic jam orchestrated by him provides his son with the opportunity to propose to his love, Anthony takes this as proof of money's power. Because Anthony is one of the newer millionaires in New York, he is not accepted by others in the aristocracy, who have a heritage of wealth. Still, this does not stop Anthony from living his life the way that he chooses and from living like—and among—his aristocratic neighbors. He buys a lavish house in between the homes of two of his

aristocratic rivals, an act that does not sit well with them. When his son, Richard, announces to Anthony that he is in love with Miss Lantry, another member of this aristocracy, Anthony encourages Richard to pursue her hand in marriage. Richard says that there is not enough time, explaining to Anthony that he only has a few minutes the next evening to talk to Miss Lantry as they are being driven to the theatre.

Nevertheless, Anthony is jovial when Richard leaves and also when his sister, Ellen, comes to talk to him. Ellen also tries to tell Anthony that money cannot help in this situation, but Anthony is stubborn. He says that money will prevail and, without Richard or Ellen's knowledge, pays a man who goes by the name of Kelly to help him out. Kelly hires a number of cabs, trucks, and even police to create the biggest traffic jam that New York has ever seen, which helps to give Richard the time he needs to successfully propose to Miss Lantry. In the final scene of the story, Anthony's role in the traffic jam is revealed when Kelly comes to collect his pay. Anthony believes that it was his money alone that helped create the circumstances in which Richard was able to propose. In fact, Anthony asks Kelly whether or not he saw Cupid, the mythical archer who shoots arrows of love, at the scene of the traffic jam. When Kelly says that he did not, Anthony takes this as fact that money has conquered over love.

Richard Rockwell

Richard Rockwall is Anthony Rockwall's son, who has just returned from college; Richard is desperately in love with Miss Lantry, a young woman who is a member of the aristocracy. Even though Richard has as much money as the aristocratic young men, he does not spend as much as they on clothes and soap. This humbleness and economy make his father happy. Anthony notes that Richard has seemed down lately. Richard explains that he has missed his opportunity to propose to Miss Lantry, since she is going to leave the country for two years and he has only a few minutes in a cab to talk to her. Anthony warns Richard not to overlook the power of money. Richard's Aunt Ellen, however, tells him to focus more on love and gives him a special ring—a symbol of luck in love—that Richard's deceased mother wished him to have. When Richard is riding in the cab with Miss Lantry the next evening, he accidentally drops the ring and has the cab stop so that he can pick it up. In this brief time, a massive traffic jam brings Richard and Miss Lantry's cab to a halt. This gives Richard the time he needs to successfully propose to Miss Lantry. Since Richard does not know that Anthony coordinated the traffic jam, he believes that it was his mother's ring that helped him win the hand of his love.

Themes

Money versus Love

"Mammon," the first word used in the title, is a synonym for wealth or money, so the reader is alerted right from the start that money will play a role in the plot. In fact, from the very beginning, Anthony Rockwall is shown as a man who believes that money can buy anything. Says Anthony to his son, Richard, "I'm for money against the field. Tell me something money won't buy." However, Richard, like his Aunt Ellen, believes that money cannot buy love. Specifically, Richard believes that money cannot buy him the time he needs to propose to Miss Lantry, who is leaving the country in a couple of days. Says Richard, "No, dad, this is one tangle that your money can't unravel." Ellen agrees with Richard and criticizes Anthony for believing solely in money. Says Ellen, "I wish you would not think so much of money. Wealth is nothing where a true affection is concerned. Love is all-powerful."

This contest of beliefs, the power of money versus the power of love, plays itself out over the course of the story. On the side of money, Anthony uses his wealth to buy a traffic jam so that Richard and Miss Lantry will be stuck long enough for Richard to propose. On the side of love, Aunt Ellen gives Richard a ring from his deceased mother. Says Ellen, "Good luck in love she said it brought. She asked me to give it to you when you had found the one you loved." During the trip in the coach, Richard drops this ring, forcing the driver to stop so that Richard can pick it up. During this time, however, Anthony's hired force of vehicles creates the traffic jam.

When Aunt Ellen reports to Anthony later that night that Richard and Miss Lantry are engaged, she attributes Richard's success to the ring that he dropped. "Money is dross compared with true love, Anthony," Ellen tells her brother. Meanwhile, Anthony believes that it was his traffic jam alone that led to the successful engagement. He asks his man, Kelly, whether or not he saw Cupid: "You didn't notice . . . anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?" Anthony is pleased to find that there was no sign of Cupid, a symbol of love and says, "I thought the little rascal wouldn't be on hand."

New Money versus Old Money

In addition to the power of money in general, O. Henry also explores the idea of new money versus old money. Anthony is a new millionaire, someone who has earned his fortune on his own, instead of having inherited it like the old millionaires of New York. Despite this fact, Anthony has chosen to live among the old rich in the city: "His neighbour to the right—the aristocratic clubman, B. Van Schuylight Suffolk-Jones—came out to his waiting motor-car, wrinkling a contumelious nostril, as usual, at the Italian renaissance sculpture of the soap palace's front elevation." Anthony is not welcome in this aristocratic neighborhood, but he ignores this social distinction, and

uses his money to buy his place among the aristocrats. Although Anthony realizes that he may never be part of the aristocratic club, he has high hopes that Richard can. He tells Richard that, thanks to him, Richard is a gentleman: "They say it takes three generations to make one. They're off. Money'll do it as slick as soap grease." Anthony believes that his extreme wealth, which rivals the wealth of the old millionaires, can literally buy a place for Richard among them. In addition, the soap-manufacturing background that keeps Anthony out of the aristocratic club is not a problem for Richard. Says Anthony, "You've got the money and the looks, and you're a decent boy. Your hands are clean. You've got no Eureka soap on 'em."

Early Twentieth-Century Rules of Courtship

The dating rules in the early twentieth century were extremely different from the dating rituals of today. This was especially true among the aristocracy, which observed strict, formal dating rules. Since Anthony was not born into the aristocracy, he is not familiar with these rules, as Richard explains to him: "You don't know the social mill, dad. She's part of the stream that turns it. Every hour and minute of her time is arranged for days in advance." Miss Lantry is part of the social elite, so her time is managed very carefully. People, especially men interested in dating her, cannot just go over to her house to see her. They must receive permission beforehand. Richard notes this to Anthony when he talks about the time that he is scheduled to see Miss Lantry: "She's at Larchmont now at her aunt's. I can't go there. But I'm allowed to meet her with a cab at the Grand Central Station to-morrow evening at the 8:30 train." From the train station, Richard will accompany Miss Lantry in a coach to the theatre, so the only real time he has to talk with her is the few minutes during the coach ride from the train station to the theatre. Richard's Aunt Ellen is aware of the social rules and agrees with Richard that he has missed his opportunity to get on Miss Lantry's schedule to propose to her. Says Ellen to Anthony, "If he only had spoken earlier! She could not have refused our Richard. But now I fear it is too late. He will have no opportunity to address her."

Deception

Deception is another major theme in the story. Anthony deceives both Richard and Ellen, planning the traffic jam behind their backs, and he does not reveal that he was the one who orchestrated it. When Aunt Ellen comes to see him, telling him that love has provided the means for Richard to propose to Miss Lantry, Anthony ignores this and acts like he has helped in some way, saying only, "I'm glad the boy has got what he wanted. I told him I wouldn't spare any expense in the matter if—." Aunt Ellen is confused and cuts him off, asking how Anthony could possibly have helped, but Anthony sends her away, saying he wants to finish reading his story. In the end, only he, Kelly, and the drivers of the fleet of hired vehicles know that Anthony created the traffic jam.

Style

Setting

The setting is extremely important in the story, as it is in all of the stories in *The Four Million.* O. Henry placed all of the stories in this collection in New York to show the diversity of people and situations in the growing city. Specifically, the setting of "Mammon and the Archer" is important because its plot hinges on some distinctly New York situations. First of all, Richard is interested in one of the daughters of the New York aristocracy who make up "the exclusive circles of society," as Richard puts it. Richard's only chance to ask Miss Lantry to marry him is in the few minutes' drive from Grand Central Station to Wallack's, a famous New York theatre. Says Richard, "Do you think she would listen to a declaration from me during that six or eight minutes under those circumstances?" However, one final characteristic of New York ends up working in Richard's favor—the legendary street traffic. When Anthony's orchestrated traffic jam blocks Richard and Miss Lantry in, they do not find it odd. As O. Henry's narrator says, "One of those street blockades had occurred that sometimes tie up commerce and movement quite suddenly in the big city." If the story took place in another, less-busy, city in the same time period, the traffic jam might look more suspicious.

Surprise Ending

O. Henry's trademark style in his short stories was to include a surprise ending, in which the reader was led to believe one thing at first but was then shown that the opposite was true. In this story, the surprise centers on the ring that Aunt Ellen gives to Richard and the traffic jam that Anthony creates. At first, the reader is led to believe, like Ellen, that it was the ring that led to the successful engagement. Says Ellen, "A little emblem of true love—a little ring that symbolized unending and unmercenary affection—was the cause of our Richard finding his happiness." However, at the very end of the story, O. Henry turns the tables on his readers. The day after the traffic jam, Kelly shows up to receive payment for something and tells Anthony that he will need to be paid more: "I had to go a little above the estimate. I got the express wagons and cabs mostly for $5, but the trucks and two-horse teams mostly raised me to $10." As Kelly goes into greater detail about what he is being paid for, the reader realizes that Anthony paid Kelly to create the traffic jam. Says Kelly, "It was two hours before a snake could get below Greeley's statue." With this surprise ending, O. Henry's readers have the sudden realization that Anthony did have a part to play in the success of Richard's engagement.

Narration

Although it may not appear so at first, "Mammon and the Archer" is ultimately a first-person narrative. The story begins in the third person, with the unnamed narrator giving details about Anthony Rockwall, his neighbor, and others. In third-person narratives, the

narrator is not part of the story and is merely there to guide the reader through the characters' story. However, near the end of this story, right before the surprise ending, O. Henry talks directly to the audience, saying: "The story should end here. I wish it would as heartily as you who read it wish it did. But we must go to the bottom of the well for truth." With this statement, O. Henry draws attention to himself, and he becomes one of the characters.

Historical Context

"Mammon and the Archer," like other stories in O. Henry's *The Four Million*, touches on aspects of life in New York City at the turn of the century. During the Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many American cities experienced an unprecedented increase in immigration, much of which was handled through New York's Ellis Island. In its heyday, Ellis Island processed more than five thousand people per day, and on its busiest day it received almost twelve thousand arrivals. Of all the nation's major cities, New York experienced the greatest increase, more than tripling its population during the last four decades of the nineteenth century. This massive increase in people, coupled with the city planners' desire to surpass other American cities, culminated in 1898—with the consolidation of the city into five boroughs: Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.

O. Henry was fascinated with New York and spent countless hours observing all aspects of the city. In many ways, New York in the early twentieth century was the city of the future because it either pioneered or adopted several new technologies and innovations. Many of these were introduced by necessity. This is most apparent in the area of transportation. As New York grew, it became imperative to find improved ways to move its residents from place to place. By 1901, streetcars and elevators in New York were being run by electricity; in 1904, the city completed construction on its subway system; and in 1907, the city replaced its Fifth Avenue horsecars with motorbuses. Still, New York had its share of disasters, such as in 1905 when an elevated train fell to the street, killing twelve.

Architecture was another area in which New York excelled. Inspired by such technological advances as steel-frame construction and the electric elevator, architects began to design more skyscrapers. The building revolution began in Chicago, following the 1871 Great Chicago fire, which destroyed much of the downtown business district. Developers wanted to maximize the space of the small, expensive downtown lots when they rebuilt the city. This, in turn, inspired architects to find new ways to construct buildings. Chicago's Home Insurance Building, often considered the first true skyscraper, was designed by William Le Baron Jenney and was completed in 1883. New York followed suit five years later with its first skyscraper, the Tower Building. It was not long, however, before New York began to surpass Chicago in the height of its buildings. Skyscrapers were generally built by the corporations that owned them, so New York had an advantage—many corporations wishing to distinguish themselves had their headquarters there because New York was also the center of commerce.

In addition to all of the technological innovations, New York boasted the largest theatre scene, known as Broadway, named after the street that contained the theatres. One of the most influential theatres was the Wallack Theatre, named after Lester Wallack, an actor and playwright. In the story, Richard notes that he is supposed to drive Miss Lantry to this theatre. Richard says to his father: "We drive down Broadway to Wallack's at a gallop, where her mother and a box party will be waiting for us in the lobby." O. Henry himself had some experience with Wallack's. Eugene Current- Garcia, in his

entry on William Sydney Porter for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* writes that O. Henry's story, "'A Retrieved Reformation,' was dramatized with phenomenal success in 1910 at Wallack's Theatre in New York."

Critical Overview

Perhaps no other American writer has gained and lost as much critical favor as quickly as O. Henry. Bruce Watson summed it up best in his 1997 *Smithsonian* article: "When he died in 1910, O. Henry was in the pantheon of American writers. These days critics regard him as a clever hack." O. Henry received some of his strongest praise for his stories about New York, which include "Mammon and the Archer." O. Henry published many of these stories under contract for the *New York World*, completing one story each week from 1903 to 1905. New Yorkers loved these stories, and O. Henry quickly became a legend in the city. O. Henry's reputation increased even more in the eyes of both critics and popular readers in 1906 with the publication of The Four Million, which collected several of his New York stories, including "Mammon and the Archer."

O. Henry's fame in 1906 extended well beyond New York. As Luther S. Luedtke and Keith Lawrence note in their entry on the author for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* the collection "sold phenomenally well and made Porter's pseudonym a household name across America." Critics and biographers cite many reasons for the passionate interest in O. Henry's short stories, but one factor stands out above the rest. In his 1916 biography of O. Henry, Alphonso Smith says, "Most of those who have commented upon O. Henry's work have singled out his technique, especially his unexpected endings, as his distinctive contribution to the American short story."

In 1916, the same year as Smith's biography, Katherine Fullerton Gerould, a noted short-story writer, became the first major critic to turn against O. Henry. Says Gerould in an infamous *New York Times Magazine interview* with Joyce Kilmer, "O. Henry did not write the short story. O. Henry wrote the expanded anecdote." This attack was answered two months later by a *Bookman critic* who suggests that Gerould might change her opinion if she read several of O. Henry's stories, including "Mammon and the Archer."

Despite the fierce defense of O. Henry by some critics, the attacks on O. Henry's works continued to build force in the 1920s. As Eugene Current-Garcia notes in his 1982 entry on the author for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* "critics such as F. L. Pattee and N. Bryllion Fagin denounced the superficiality and falseness in his stories and his failure, as they saw it, to take himself and his art seriously." And Luedtke and Lawrence note in their *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry that "Critics of the 1920s satirized mercilessly the hundreds of would be writers who emulated Porter's formulaic plot constructions." In 1943, this animosity reached a head, with the publication of the first edition of *Understanding Fiction* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. In his 1974 entry on O. Henry for *American Writers,* Kent Bales notes that, in this book, O. Henry was "exhibited as a writer who did not understand fiction." This attitude persisted throughout the twentieth century, and few critics since have praised O. Henry's writings.

In addition, few critics have chosen to discuss O. Henry's specific stories in detail, even stories like "Mammon and the Archer," one of O. Henry's most popular and most anthologized stories. In his entry on O. Henry for *Twayne's United States Authors*

Series Online, Current-Garcia calls Anthony Rockwall "the epitome of O. Henry's type of the self-made American business tycoon; he knows that money talks, even in affairs of the heart." However, Bales (writing in *American Writers*) offers a different interpretation of the story, saying that, although the story's surprise ending reveals that Anthony has orchestrated the traffic jam, "Kelly's report opens ample room for doubt." Bales notes that, since Kelly and his crew were exactly on time, "the traffic jam organized by Anthony's money would have been several seconds late," if it had not been for Richard's dropping the ring—a distinct symbol of love. Says Bales, "it is left to the reader to see that the story is about Mammon *and* the Archer, not—as the apparent reversal in the ending suggests— Mammon over the Archer."

Despite O. Henry's fall with many of the critics, Luedtke and Lawrence cite many reasons why O. Henry has secured a place in American literature. These include the author's large body of work, his continued renown with popular readers, the many character types that he introduced, the perceptions of America that he created, and the credibility that he gave to the art form of the short story. Finally, Luedtke and Lawrence note that "The gap between public and critical opinion of Porter's work is tenuously, and ironically, bridged by one of America's most prestigious short-story awards, named in O. Henry's honor."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette examines Henry's hidden meanings in "Mammon and the Archer."

Although Henry's literary reputation has declined since the early twentieth century, his works are starting to be interpreted by select critics. One of these critics, Kent Bales, notes in his *American Writers* entry that Henry, like Edgar Allan Poe, included hidden meanings in his fiction. However, Bales notes that "Henry keeps his suggested meanings well hidden," as Poe did, so that his message is not immediately apparent to the reader. In "Mammon and the Archer," these hidden meanings can be discovered by examining the story's ending, Henry's distinctive word choice, and his use of contradictions.

In the story, after it has been revealed that Anthony Rockwall has hired Kelly to create the traffic jam, he asks Kelly: "You didn't notice . . . anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?" Anthony laughs when Kelly says he has not. Says Anthony, "I thought the little rascal wouldn't be on hand." In Anthony's mind, money has triumphed over love, which he equates with Cupid, the Roman god of love. Likewise, since Ellen does not know that Anthony paid for the traffic jam, she believes that love—as symbolized by the ring—has prevailed. Both are correct. As Bales notes, the story "conceals in its ending a fact that brings that ending into doubt." Bales cites part of Kelly's report, in which the hired man says, "The boys was on time to the fraction of a second." If this is literally true, says Bales, then both the ring (love) and Anthony's traffic jam (money) play a part in Richard's successful engagement. If Richard had not accidentally dropped the ring, the traffic jam would have arrived too late to block them in. And, if there had been no traffic jam, then Richard would have only gained the extra minute that it took him to recover his ring. In other words, neither wealth nor love prevails totally in the end. It takes a balance of both to pull off the engagement.

This tricky ending signals the reader that there may be other aspects of the story that require further exploration. Upon further scrutiny, readers may notice that Henry uses some very odd and distinct words when he is telling his tale. This starts with the very first word of the title, "Mammon," an uncommon word. "Mammon" is the word used to signify wealth in the New Testament of the Bible. The word is used in Jesus' famous sermon on the mount, in which he says that man cannot serve both God and mammon. In addition, in medieval times, scholars defined seven deadly sins, each of which was represented by a corresponding archdemon. For avarice, or greed, the archdemon was named Mammon. By using a word with such religious associations, Henry elevates the stage for the ideological battle between Mammon and the Archer—money and love.

Henry's use of religious references is consistent throughout the story. Early on, Anthony talks about the "Eden Musée," which he says will get his neighbor "if he don't watch out." Musée is the French word for "museum," and Eden is the garden in the Bible

where Adam and Eve, the first created man and woman, dwelled until they were expelled for their sins. Although Anthony could just be talking about a real "Eden" museum, other religious references in the story suggest that he chose the word "Eden" to increase the religious quality of the story. For example, later on in the story, Kelly tells Anthony of the traffic jam, "It was two hours before a snake could get below Greeley's statue." The use of the word, "snake," is particularly curious, since New York is a city. Cities, even in the early 1900s, did not often contain snakes, which are generally found in more rural areas. However, since Henry has already refer to Eden, it makes sense to include a reference to a snake—in the Bible, it is a snake that tempts Adam and Eve to sin.

Some of the divine references in the story are coupled directly with the idea of money. The most blatant examples occur when Anthony is trying to convince Richard that he should literally worship money. Says Anthony, "don't forget to burn a few punk sticks in the joss house to the great god Mazuma from time to time." "Mazuma" is Yiddish slang for money, but, in this instance, Anthony is making money a literal god. A "joss house" is a Chinese temple or shrine. Henry includes enough religious references to draw attention to them but seems to want to avoid subscribing to any one religion, and so he includes references from many. In addition to strictly religious references, Anthony includes Father Time, an imaginary personification of time that is often referred to as a god-like being. Says Anthony, in the same conversation to Richard, "I've seen Father Time get pretty bad stone bruises on his heels when he walked through the gold diggings." This comment, which is a response to Richard's statement that one cannot buy time, is an elaborate and heightened way of talking about the power of money to conquer.

This elaborate style of speech is also used when describing some of the characters. Anthony, in particular, is depicted as a god-like figure. In the beginning of the story, Anthony calls for his servant, Mike, "in the same voice that had once chipped off pieces of the welkin on the Kansas prairies." This confusing sentence makes a little more sense once it is deciphered. "Welkin" is another word for the vault of the sky, or heaven. If Anthony's voice is so loud that he has broken pieces off heaven, then he is a very powerful being indeed. As for the "Kansas prairies," Anthony most likely grew up in Kansas. That he has been able to leave the prairie and make his own fortune, and that he now lives among the aristocrats of New York, are further indications of his personal strength.

Anthony is also associated with a number of evils. When Ellen comes to see Anthony at the end of the story, Anthony is "in a red dressing gown, reading a book of piratical adventures." The choice of colors can be very significant in a story. In this case, red, a color often associated with the devil, makes Anthony appear devil-like, especially when he is reading a story about pirates—who are notorious for their crimes such as murder and theft. In fact, when Anthony talks about the pirate story to Ellen, he says, "I've got my pirate in a devil of a scrape. His ship has just been scuttled, and he's too good a judge of the value of money to let drown." The use of the word "devil" is interesting, given Anthony's red gown. Also, normally, a reader does not refer to a character in a book as his own. The fact that Anthony takes ownership of the pirate seems to

underscore his association with evil. Furthermore, the story itself is very telling, since the pirate loves money as much as Anthony does. The word "evil" is also used directly in the story in association with Anthony. When describing another one of Anthony's responses to Richard about money, Henry describes Anthony's remark in this way: "thundered the champion of the root of evil." The thunder, like the earlier reference to Anthony's loud voice, is an indication of Anthony's god-like stature. The designation of money as "the root of evil" and of Anthony as its "champion" appears to be a clear labeling of his character.

Anthony is not the only character in the story with unsavory associations, however. Kelly is described as "a person with red hands." Though the red in this case could be another reference to devillike behavior, Henry could also be using the color in a literal sense, saying that Kelly is red-handed, as in somebody who gets caught red-handed—in other words, a thief. This is highly probable, since Henry says that the man "called himself Kelly," which means that this is not his real name. Kelly does not use his real name in his deceptive dealings with Anthony and others, which is sometimes a sign that somebody is a crook. In addition to his questionable background, Kelly also says that he "can lick the man that invented poverty." In most religions, poverty is considered a good thing, since the poor are less likely to succumb to vices like materialism and greed.

In addition to the evil references, there are references to the divine in the story, namely in the descriptions of Ellen and Richard. When Ellen comes to tell Anthony that love has triumphed, Henry says that she looked "like a gray-haired angel that had been left on earth by mistake." To a lesser extent, Richard's purity is established. When Anthony is comparing Richard to himself, he tells his son, "you're a decent boy. Your hands are clean," implying that his own hands are not.

However, as tempting as it is to label the characters as distinctly good or evil, Henry himself discourages readers from doing this. Nothing is cutand- dry, because Henry plants good qualities in Anthony and bad qualities in Ellen. At one point, Anthony is described as having a "kindly grimace," while Ellen is described as "gentle, sentimental, wrinkled, sighing, oppressed by wealth." If Anthony is truly supposed to be representative of a devil, he would not be "kindly." And if Ellen is supposed to be a perfect angel, she would be poor, not "oppressed by wealth." These opposites exist elsewhere in the story, further prompting the reader to be skeptical of any concrete labeling of characters or situations. For example, when Ellen gives Richard his mother's ring, she takes the "quaint old gold ring from a moth-eaten case." Gold is a sign of wealth, as well as vanity when it is worn as an object. Conversely, a moth-eaten case suggests poverty and humility. The biggest contradiction in the story is in the idea of deception, which is normally considered bad. However, in this case, Anthony uses deceptive methods to do a good deed—secretly helping to buy time for his son to win over his love.

In the end, Henry's story, which on the surface appears to be a simple tale about the power of money, in reality is something much different. After reading through all of the clues that Henry imbeds in his tale, one can see that he is communicating two hidden messages to his readers. First, the forces of good and evil are equally matched and

thus cannot succeed on their own. It is only when they work together, albeit unwittingly, that they achieve their goals. Says Bates, "it is left to the reader to see that the story is about Mammon and the Archer, not—as the apparent reversal in the ending suggests—Mammon over the Archer." However, this is not the entire story. Henry is also telling his readers that the definition of evil is a tricky business, since neither Anthony nor Ellen, the two combatants in the ideological battle of money versus love, can be defined as purely evil or good. The idea of what makes a person bad was an important theme in both the writings and life of Henry—an ex-convict who, by most accounts, carried the shame of his prison experience with him for the rest of his life. It must have provided some comfort for him to be able to create characters that had some questionable associations or experiences, but which were not inherently bad, and to share these characters with a reading public who adored him.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on "Mammon and the Archer," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2003.

BOOKRAGS

Critical Essay #2

Partikian is a freelance writer and English instructor. In this essay, Partikian explains that an epistemological approach to O. Henry's story is more helpful in understanding the story than merely analyzing the triumph of either love or wealth.

In a first reading, "Mammon and the Archer" is a straightforward tale that pits two contradictory characters and philosophies against one another. Anthony Rockwall is a self-made "ex-Soap King" who believes in the supremacy of money, even to the extent that money can buy love. Aunt Ellen, on the other hand, is sentimental and has a more idealistic notion concerning true love. By the end of the tale, both characters believe that their beliefs have been vindicated by the engagement of young Richard and Miss Lantry. However, neither Anthony Rockwall nor Aunt Ellen truly knows all the circumstances; each one has an opinion that is misinformed. The narrative contains lacunae—gaps in knowledge and an absence of adequate description of key events—that do not clarify or allow the reader to make an accurate assessment as to whether money or love triumphs in the end; for example, O. Henry completely neglects portraying what actually takes place in the carriage, the incident which leads to the engagement. The ending is ambiguous, particularly without the depiction of the crucial carriage scene. While the ending is neither an endorsement of the power of true love or money, it is an epistemological homage illustrating the bounds and limits of each character's and each reader's understanding of what has occurred.

Epistemology is the study of the nature and grounds of human knowledge. The theories place particular emphasis on the limits of knowledge and the degree that knowledge can be validated. For instance, an epistemological study of religion would involve exactly how human beings can or cannot prove the existence of God. What are the limitations to a logical attempt to prove God exists? Do these limitations, if sufficient enough, prove that God does not exist? O. Henry's story, with all its gaps and limitations on what is known to the two key characters and the reader, is an epistemological text. Any attempts at proving the superiority of either Mammon or the Archer must begin with a scrutiny of the limitations on knowledge inherent throughout.

Old Anthony Rockwall's entire outlook on life is defined by money. He is a self-made man whose position is validated by his fortune. The allusions to this within the text are so numerous that O. Henry could easily be accused of creating a character who is too one-dimensional. Old Rockwall talks of nothing but money. This obsession is parodied when Old Rockwall measures the "worth" of his son by how much Richard spends on soap: "'You're a gentleman,' said Anthony, decidedly. 'I've heard of young bloods spending $24 a dozen for soap, and going over the hundred mark for clothes.'" He even picks out vague references to money and profit while relaxing with a book: "'Sister,' said Anthony Rockwall. 'I've got my pirate in a devil of a scrape. His ship has just been scuttled, and he's too good a judge of the value of money to let drown. I wish you would let me go on with this chapter.'" This obsession with money limits Anthony's ability to evaluate a situation in any other terms. He knows that money has gained him access into the highest levels of New York society, although he admits that he is not readily

accepted: "I'm nearly as impolite and ill-mannered as these two old knickerbocker gents on each side of me that can't sleep of nights because I bought in between 'em." Anthony's status as a parvenu, a nouveau riche member of society, is further emphasized by the narrator snidely referring to him as the "ex-Soap King" and to his home as the "soap palace." While an image of the King of England may command some respect, the image of a soap king living in a soap palace, presumably feverishly hoping that it never rains, invites mockery. Indeed, the descriptions of Anthony may be viewed as mocking in light of the fact that Anthony so clearly holds up wealth as a universal truth, almost a religion.

The very title of the tale includes a synonym for money with negative implications; the word mammon, as used by Matthew in the New Testament (6:24) refers to material wealth or possessions, especially in light of it having a debasing influence: "You cannot serve God and mammon." Considering that Anthony invokes different religions and pagan cultural figures throughout the text in a derogatory way ("But don't forget to burn a few punk sticks in the joss house to the god Mazuma from time to time" and "You didn't notice . . . anywhere in the tie-up, a kind of a fat boy without any clothes on shooting arrows around with a bow, did you?"), O. Henry's use of a derogatory term for money in the title is ironic. Anthony's adamant nature, failing to allow for any other view but his own, is implied in his very name, Rockwall. He is indeed like a rock wall, intractable and unable to allow any concept into his world view except that of wealth. In terms of epistemology, Anthony's monomaniacal obsession with wealth limits his ability to see the truth.

Just as Anthony is obsessed with championing wealth, Aunt Ellen is adamant in her belief that love will triumph in the end. The narrator describes her as "sentimental" and "oppressed by wealth." Her belief that "Love is all-powerful" is partly wishful thinking and based on her ignorance of the mercenary ways of the world. She remains ignorant to the very end as to the cause of the fortuitous traffic jam, preferring her own romantic notion as to the power of a ring. O. Henry does not treat her with kid gloves in his choice of words. While Cupid, the Roman god of erotic love whom Anthony belittles, is usually viewed as a positive romantic figure, his depiction as an archer in the title brings to mind trivial and war-like connotations. Just as mammon is more negative than money, archer is more trite and commonplace than Cupid. The title of the story subtly questions the validity of the respective value systems of both Anthony and Ellen.

So where does the truth lie? If O. Henry is illustrating the limits to acknowledging the truth in the values of his two main characters, what is his solution to the question of money versus love? The question is, perhaps, impossible to answer because O. Henry has left gaps in the narrative and character development, which would have clued the reader into his sentiments and which are exactly what make the tale brilliantly ambiguous.

O. Henry is best remembered as a writer of a specific era and place—New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is known for stories with a surprise ending that unexpectedly tie all the loose ends together. In this sense, he is the quintessential representative of an earlier pragmatic America where everything seemed

black and white; there were no ambiguous shades of gray. Most of his body of work is made up of neat, tidy stories that have value as entertainment with neatly summed up conclusions rather than as serious literature with ambiguity that invites lingering questions.

However, in the case of "Mammon and the Archer," the ending is not so neat and tidy because O. Henry has held back information that would enable the reader to better comprehend and judge; the conversation and wooing that takes place in the carriage during the traffic jam is the crucial dialogue of the whole tale. Without an accurate depiction of this scene, one cannot figure out which system triumphs. Yet, it is completely absent from the text. It is lacunae of this sort that often relegates O. Henry's fiction to the second rate but that works so well in this particular tale. An accurate depiction of this conversation would have involved subtle character development as well as hints of the differing classes of society that the two represent. Miss Lantry belongs to old money, long established in New York, while Richard is an upstart son of a parvenu. What did he say in the carriage that could have possibly convinced her of his sentiments towards her? There is nothing in the story to indicate that he is indeed worthy of Miss Lantry and even less of a hint that this busy society lady is worth chasing at all. The modern reader is left wishing that contemporaries of O. Henry, like Henry James and Edith Wharton who both portrayed social classes in New York with all their foibles, had described the carriage conversation between Miss Lantry and Robert with all the subtle ironic allusions to the pettiness and vacuity of New York high society. Instead, readers are left with O. Henry's depiction of the merest of situational factors, the dropping of a ring and the fabricated traffic jam, as the sole combatants that vie for superiority in the question of Love versus Wealth.

O. Henry's avoidance of complicated psychological motives is the reason for the great success he achieved during his lifetime as a short story writer. By keeping his characters one dimensional and his scenarios simple, he is able to manipulate a surprise ending that neatly ties together all the loose ends. Ironically, O. Henry's lack of critical acclaim today is a result of the same ability that made him a great success in his own lifetime. While the entrance of the shady character who "called himself Kelly" does introduce a twist to the end of the tale, the realization that Anthony has fabricated the traffi jam creates an ending not nearly as tidy as O. Henry's other tales. The lack of tidiness is exactly why "Mammon and the Archer" stands out in his body of work today.

"Mammon and the Archer" is an exception in O. Henry's body of work, in that the gaps in the narrative depictions and the inability of both Anthony and Ellen to acknowledge any factors outside their own narrow belief systems have led to a work with marvelously ambiguous epistemological implications. Can one ever really know whether wealth or love is triumphant in the end? The title's mocking allusion to the gods of both Anthony and Ellen leads the reader to believe that neither philosophy reigns supreme without help from the other. In this sense, neither mammon nor the archer is the key word in understanding the title. Rather, it is that largely overlooked conjunction "and." O. Henry was deliberate in titling the work. He did not choose "Mammon or the Archer." The two gods or philosophical systems are not mutually exclusive. They rely on one another to

bring about a harmonious solution. Any attempt to define the world or seek truth in one at the exclusion of the other is doomed to a dismal failure.

Source: David Partikian, Critical Essay on "Mammon and the Archer," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2003.

Adaptations

The Four Million, a collection that includes the story "Mammon and the Archer," was adapted as an audiobook by Books on Tape in 1982. This unabridged adaptation consists of six audiocassettes. The stories themselves are narrated by various readers.

Topics for Further Study

Pick another writer from the twentieth century who writes or has written stories about New York. Read one of this author's stories, and compare the author's version of New York with O. Henry's interpretation of the city.

Research what life was like for Miss Lantry and other wealthy young women in the early 1900s. Put yourself in her place, and write a journal entry that covers the day Richard proposes to her in the coach. Include as many details as you can from Miss Lantry's daily life—including any restrictions that might have been placed on her— using your research to support your ideas.

In the story, Anthony Rockwall is one of the new rich, a self-made American man who has earned his money through industry. This fact does not sit well with his established neighbors, who have inherited their wealth. Research the current social designations for wealthy men and women in America, and compare these to the new rich and old rich categories of the early 1900s.

In the story, Anthony Rockwall uses his money to literally buy a traffic jam in New York, inconveniencing all the other street traffic for two hours to give Richard the time he needs to propose to Miss Lantry. Compare this situation to one other real-life situation from both the early 1900s and the last ten years in which a wealthy person has been able to use his or her money to get special treatment that has inconvenienced other citizens. Discuss whether or not you feel money should give someone this much power.

Research the actual volumes of traffic that New York experienced in the early 1900s, and compare this to the volume of traffic that New York experiences today. Also, research the various strategies that large cities have devised since the early 1900s to accommodate an increasing amount of traffic, and discuss whether or not these methods have been effective.

Compare and Contrast

1900s: By the end of the decade, America boasts more than forty thousand millionaires, many of whom earned their fortunes in industry.

Today: America has countless millionaires and several billionaires. Industry, most notably information technology, is the major source of this income for some. However, an increasing number of sports stars, entertainers, writers, and other public figures— who often earn advances, sponsorship deals, and other supplemental income— join the ranks of the extremely wealthy.

1900s: New York contains some of the tallest skyscrapers in the world, including the twentystory, steel-frame Flatiron Building. Skyscrapers begin to include electric elevators.

Today: On September 11, 2001, terrorists attack and destroy the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Each of the two 110- story buildings contained ninety-seven passenger elevators.

1900s: New York is the hub of the theatre industry, represented by Broadway, and the early film industry, which is centered in Queens.

Today: Broadway maintains its dominance of the theatre scene, although patrons also attend shows on the Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway venues. Hollywood, California, is the generally acknowledged center of the modern film industry. However, New York's distinctive features —including its skyline and diverse city neighborhoods — make it an attractive choice for many on-location film and television shoots.

BOOKRAGS

What Do I Read Next?

Although O. Henry's literary reputation is still in question today, his name has been attached to one of the most prestigious short-story contests in the United States: the O. Henry Awards. Each year, stories from this contest are published in a special volume of prize stories. The eighty-first edition of this series, *Prize Stories 2001: The O. Henry Awards,* was published in 2001 and contains works from established authors and newcomers alike.

O. Henry's first book, *Cabbages and Kings* (1904), is referred to by some as a novel, by others as a collection of short stories. O. Henry created the book by combining a number of his previous short stories about Central America— along with some new stories—into one interlinked narrative. The main story concerns a president of a South American country, who flees the country after being deposed in a revolution.

O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" is a Christmas story that was originally published in *The Four Million* in 1906. This classic story, one of O. Henry's best known, depicts the wonderful— and contradictory—sacrifices that a husband and wife make so that they can give each other special Christmas gifts.

Although O. Henry is today remembered mainly for New York stories like "Mammon and the Archer," he also wrote a number of western stories, many of which were based on his experiences in Texas and Latin America. He collected almost twenty of these tales in *Heart of the West,* which was first published in 1907.

O. Henry also wrote a number of stories for young boys, the most famous of which is *The Ransom of Red Chief,* which was first published in 1907 and which was collected in *Whirligigs* in 1910. The story concerns two amateur crooks who kidnap a little boy in an attempt to get ransom money to fund their future crimes. However, in an ironic twist, the child proves to be more trouble than the crooks.

In Steven W. Saylor's historical novel entitled *A Twist at the End: A Novel of O. Henry* (2000), O. Henry, as the real-life Will Porter from 1906, tries to solve an actual serial murder from 1885. Through a series of flashbacks, Saylor takes Will, and the reader, back through the past, relying on both fictional and historically accurate details to tell the tale.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, who wrote under the well-known pseudonym of Mark Twain, was a contemporary of O. Henry's. Known primarily as a humorist, Twain used his comedic talents in the social satire *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873), a book that he cowrote with Charles Dudley Warner. The book detailed the corruption that was going on in America at the time, when Twain and Warner saw money as the biggest concern for most. The two writers mock many aspects of their society, including the aristocracy.

Further Study

Blansfield, Karen Charmaine, *Cheap Rooms and Restless Hearts: A Study of Formula in the Urban Tales of William Sydney Porter*, Popular Press, 1988.

This book explores the characters and plot patterns found in O. Henry's urban tales and offers a new evaluation of O. Henry's literary merit and contributions.

Bloom, Harold, ed., *O. Henry*, Bloom's Major Short Story Writers series, Chelsea House, 1999.

Bloom, a noted literary critic, collects a variety of criticism on O. Henry from others. In addition, the book features a biography of O. Henry, themes and characters from selected O. Henry stories, a bibliography of O. Henry's writings, and notes and an introduction by Bloom.

Burrows, Edwin G., and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898,* Oxford University Press, 2000.

This early history of New York is the most comprehensive study thus far. Burrows and Wallace combine both original and recent scholarship to provide a complete overview of the city, from the first discovery of the port city by Europeans to the 1898 formation of New York's five boroughs. This massive book also contains a bibliography as well as name and subject indices.

Langford, Gerald, *Alias O. Henry: A Biography of William Sidney Porter,* Greenwood Publishing, 1983.

This definitive biography of O. Henry, originally published in 1957, offers a comprehensive, fact-filled overview of the author's life and career.

Wall, Diana Dizerega, and Anne-Marie E. Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City,* Yale University Press, 2001.

Published on the eve of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on and destruction of the World Trade Center, this book serves as a timely reminder that New York's long heritage goes beyond its distinctive skyline. Using both historical and archaeological research, the authors explore New York's history, unearthing stories from all five boroughs.

Wuthnow, Robert, *God and Mammon in America,* Free Press, 1998.

This book derives its title from the biblical instruction that humanity cannot serve both God and mammon, or wealth. Wuthnow poses the idea that modern-day religion does not always help people to be less materialistic and that it may, in fact, encourage people to be wealthy.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Short Stories for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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