A Map of Tripoli, 1967 Study Guide

A Map of Tripoli, 1967 by Marlene Reed Wetzel

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Introduction

Marlene Reed Wetzel's "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" is a story of love between two people from very different worlds who are surrounded by portents of war and violence. The story is set in Tripoli, Libya, in the months before the 1967 Six Day War between Israel on one side and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria on the other. Wetzel noted in an interview on the Amazon.com web site that the origins of the story came from her experiences living in Libya in the 1960s and meeting a Jewish crystal salesman named Mantini. The rest of the events in the piece are fiction, according to Wetzel, although she did hear about the final incident in the story after leaving Libya.

Author Biography

Marlene Reed Wetzel was born April 5, 1937, and reared on a small, isolated ranch north of Mile City, Montana, but has also lived and worked in the Middle East. She graduated from the University of Tulsa with a bachelor's degree in English and is currently a freelance writer in Oklahoma.

Wetzel's "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" won the 2000 PEN/Amazon.com Short Story Award, an effort by the national association of literary writers and the online bookseller to discover unpublished writers. Wetzel's story was chosen the winner from among more than twelve thousand entries. Though the events of the story are based on her experiences living in Libya in the 1960s, Wetzel did not begin writing the piece until the late 1990s. Referring to the origins of the story in an interview on the Amazon.com web site, Wetzel noted, "The politics and grudges of the Middle East were part of my experience." She remembers buying a set of Baccarat stemware from a Jewish shop owner named Mantini, and she remembers hearing, after leaving Libya, about the incident that closes the story. The rest of the story is "pure fiction," according to Wetzel. As part of the prize, "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" was published in *The Boston Book Review.*

Wetzel reported that winning the PEN/Amazon prize was "totally unexpected" and has generated numerous contacts from major publishing houses and agents. But, in an interview in *The University of Tulsa Magazine,* Wetzel added that some of the attention was "not entirely positive" and that some agents have told her that she must "write a certain type and style of material to be marketable." She hastened to note, though, that some of the agents and publishing representatives have encouraged her to follow her "natural process as a writer . . . and keep in touch." While "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," rewritten "at least twenty times" according to the author, is one of her first efforts at fiction, she has since published a short story in the *Seattle Review* entitled "Nikolas" and set in Montana.

Plot Summary

Section 1

"A Map of Tripoli, 1967" opens in the city of Tripoli, Libya, in the months before the Six Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Mantini, the Jewish shopkeeper, is opening his crystal store with the help of his shop boy, Mohammed. The American woman Carla has been in town for barely a month and is navigating the narrow streets of Tripoli in her Volkswagen, searching for Mantini's shop.

While maneuvering through the streets, Carla remembers when her husband, Ben, who works at the United States Embassy, picked her up at the airport a month earlier and then immediately rushed off to an assignment in Egypt, leaving her to settle in by herself. Her husband had changed his way of speaking and his looks since Carla last saw him, and this disoriented her. She also remembers Moham-med coming to her house, on loan from Mantini to iron Ben's shirts. Mohammed suggested then that Carla look for crystal at Mantini's shop.

When Carla finally finds Mantini's shop, he is gracious, and she finds him charming. They talk about what crystal she is interested in buying, and he mentions Lucia. Carla expresses her sympathy for Lucia's death. Mantini sends Mohammed out for coffee, and when she drinks it Carla becomes faint from its strength. Mantini is tender with her, placing her head in his lap and putting ice cubes wrapped in a cloth on her forehead. He tells her a little about his life, how he has moved from Italy and from place to place, and how he understands how hard that is. Mantini tells her to come to him whenever she needs a friend and arranges to have her driven back to her house.

Section 2

Mantini returns to his home, Villa Cappellini, and notes that the entire household seems to be waiting for Lucia's return. Mohammed is also there, cleaning pans.

Mantini reminisces about how Ben flirted shamelessly with Lucia at a dance. At that time, Lucia was just barely pregnant, Mantini remembers. She generously sent Mohammed over to Ben's house to iron his shirts, since Carla had not yet arrived. Mantini considers Ben a "barbarian" and "affected." Now, he realizes that Ben's wife, Carla, has enlivened him after Lucia's death, and has him wanting to send flowers again.

Section 3

Ben and Carla are going to dinner at a restaurant. Ben argues with the block watcher, who asks for a few coins to watch the car while they are in the restaurant, and Carla marvels that even though Ben has lived in Tripoli for almost a year, he still does not

understand that sometimes the way to get things done is through a little monetary tip, called *baksheesh.* She asks him why he has asked her to come to Tripoli since he is never around, and he answers, "It's my job." When they return to the car, a hubcap is missing.

Section 4

Carla is now having a love affair with Mantini. Once a week they meet above his shop and spend time together. He is an attentive lover and showers her with affection. One time, Mantini talks about how Lucia, after giving birth to their daughter, died the very day she came home from the hospital. He blames the doctor, Vollmer, for leaving a piece of the placenta inside her, causing her to bleed to death. Much to Mantini's dismay, Lucia's mother came quickly after Lucia's death to take the baby back to Italy.

Suddenly there is a crash in the store below, and Mantini realizes that he has forgotten to lower the gate protecting the store's windows. On one intact window the Arabic word for Jew is scrawled, and Carla asks whether this is "the beginning." Mantini responds, "No . . . It's probably the end." Carla asks whether he will leave because of the mounting tensions between the Jews and the Arabs, and he says no—but he is sure that she will leave eventually.

The next week Carla is in her car returning from Mantini's when a threatening crowd surrounds her, but the police soon come and run off the crowd. When she gets home Ben is there, to her surprise. She tells him what has happened, but he is not very sympathetic to her wanting to leave Tripoli. He asks what she was doing in that part of town and then pushes her down to the ground, scratching her wrist and causing her to bleed. "You'd better think twice before ruining my career," he says. Ben gives her a map of the city, with evacuation plans and a secret route to the airport, in case of an emergency.

Section 5

Mantini comes to Carla's house only once and asks her to leave Ben and live with him. She thinks the arrangement sounds complicated; she would have to deal not only with Mantini and Mohammed, but also with Lucia's mother in Italy, as well as the difficulties of being Ben's wife. Later, she and Mantini go to the beach.

Section 6

The Six Day War begins, and Carla is evacuated from Tripoli on a military plane. Before she leaves, she puts money in an envelope, places it on her car, and writes a note asking whoever finds it to tell Mantini that she is safe.

Section 7

Carla is now in Rome with the rest of the embassy families and other Americans living in Tripoli. She meets with Ben, who suggests that they get a divorce. She agrees.

Section 8

Back in Tripoli, Mantini leaves the Villa Cappellini, drives to his shop with a small suitcase, and has breakfast. He sits in the room above his shop, where he and Carla used to make love, and waits for the crowd to descend upon his shop.

Section 9

The time is a bit later after the evacuation, but Carla is still in Rome, working at the American Embassy and unsuccessfully attempting to get a visa to return to Libya. She goes to a dinner, where she hears someone talk about Mantini, and how a mob ransacked his crystal shop.

Section 1

Section 1 Summary

"A Map of Tripoli, 1967" is Marlene Reed Wetzel's story about the relationship between an American diplomat's wife, Carla, and an Italian Jewish shopkeeper, Mantini, in Tripoli, a major port city in Libya, prior to the Six Day War between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria in June of 1967.

As the story begins, Mantini opens his crystal shop, Cristalli Imports, on the Giaddat Istiklal. Mantini calls to his shop boy, Mohammed, to bring coffee, while Mantini decides whether to think about his dead wife, Lucia, that day.

At the same time, Carla is making her way to Mantini's store for the first time, noting landmarks to help her find her way back home. Frustrated with the traffic, Carla has left her Volkswagen on the street and walks with the directions provided by the shop boy, Mohammed, who works in her home one day each week. Mohammed has promised that Cristalli Imports has all Carla will need for entertaining in her new home.

Carla had met Mohammed, when he bicycled to her home one day, offering to do ironing. Carla had been on her hands and knees trying to remove spattered paint from the terrazzo floors of yet one more temporary home during her husband, Ben's, diplomatic career.

Carla has been in Tripoli only 33 days, including the day Ben picked her up at the airport and gave her the embassy number where she could find any information she might need to settle in. Ben, who has been living here for a little while, leaves Carla the next day for a work assignment in Egypt.

The house where she and Ben will live does not quite meet Ben's glowing descriptions. Carla is left to set up household and find her way around on her own, shunning the company of other embassy wives.

Carla enters the crystal shop and is greeted by Mantini, who speaks to her in Italian. Carla can reply only with a brief greeting in halting Italian. Mantini takes Carla's hands, as she inquires about the brands of crystal he sells. Carla finds Mantini charming and wonders why he still holds her hands that she realizes are rough from all the work at the house.

Mantini thinks to himself that he would love to pamper Carla's hands with some scented Parisian crime, but speaks instead of the thousands of pieces of crystal that he has available in the shop. Carla mentions Mohammed, and Mantini offers the fact that his late wife, Lucia, had sent Mohammed to iron Ben's shirts once a week, prior to Carla arriving in Tripoli.

Carla remembers hearing about Lucia, who had died a few months ago after giving birth to a daughter. Mantini waves away Carla's words of sympathy and makes a joke about being a Jewish shopkeeper, who may cheat her. Mantini also makes wine. Carla comments that it is good, although she had tried it and was not impressed with its flavor.

Mantini calls for more coffee, as Carla selects a Baccarat crystal goblet. Mantini promises that the glasses are in stock, which should please her, because he knows that Americans do not like to wait. Mantini comments on the red rooster adorning Carla's denim skirt. She remembers that Ben told her the skirt was too ostentatious for this area, but she likes to wear it anyway.

Carla nearly passes out after swallowing the cup of coffee in one drink, mirroring Mantini's style. Carla imagines that she is dying and would like to be buried in the small cemetery that she had seen outside of town. However, it is too late to tell anyone, now. Mantini holds Carla on the floor and wipes her brow, until she regains her lucidity.

Mantini speaks softly to Carla and tells her that he understands her unhappiness about being forced to live in a place where she does not want to be. Mantini shares with her the fact that he and his family have moved around much, too. Carla is brought to tears from his compassion.

Mantini advises Carla to stay away from the embassy wives, take many naps, and visit him, whenever she needs a friend. The crystal goblets arrive the next day, along with a bouquet of flowers.

Section 1 Analysis

The story is told from the omniscient narrative point of view. This means that the plot unfolds, and the reader is given insight alternately into Carla and Mantini's thoughts and emotions.

The author uses the literary technique of foreshadowing related to roosters. The sound of a rooster is heard on the street, when Mantini opens the shop in the morning. Mantini comments on the rooster on Carla's skirt. The rooster symbolizes male confidence and the slang word, cock, for male genitalia. The symbol of the rooster early in the story will also come into play at the end of the story.

There is also foreshadowing related to the red hibiscus mentioned during Carla's thoughts, as she walks to Mantini's store. "'Il mio fiore,' the man she hasn't quite met will say to her one day, placing a blood-red hibiscus in her hand." Mantini will soon give Carla a red hibiscus, and the hibiscus will be mentioned several times throughout the story.

The author also intersperses Italian phrases into the story through Mantini's character, for example, when he alternately calls Carla, "cara," the Italian word for "dear," and also in this section, "Il mio fiore," which means "my flower."

Section 2

Section 2 Summary

Later that day, Mantini returns to his home, the Villa Cappellini, where Mohammed is working in the kitchen. Mantini can sense Lucia's presence, as he undresses and notices the baby bed all covered in ruffles and lace.

Mantini tells Mohammed that he met Carla today, the wife of the man whose shirts Mohammed irons. Mantini recalls meeting Dan at a party last summer and bristles at the memory of Dan dancing suggestively with Lucia. Mantini had asserted his husbandly rights over Lucia after the dance to show this bold American to whom Lucia belonged.

Now, Lucia is dead, and Mantini has a hard time remembering her some days. Mantini also thinks of Carla, the American's wife, who has rekindled his feelings of romance so unexpectedly.

Section 2 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of irony in the story through the situation at the dance, where Ben had tried to seduce Lucia right in front of Mantini. Now, Mantini has met Carla and knows that he could seduce Ben's wife with little problem.

The author uses a metaphor to describe Lucia in her newly pregnant condition as, "She was scarcely pregnant, just enough to look ripe, and her hair was tied back with a ribbon. The dress was purple, the color of eggplants--the egg was planted!" The imagery is perfectly crafted to represent the slightly swollen woman dressed in purple, mimicking the shape of the glossy, purple vegetable.

Section 3

Section 3 Summary

Carla does not recognize the man who is her husband. Ben, who has been living in Tripoli for a year, has adopted some of the mannerisms and speech of the locals. Outside the restaurant, Ristorante Piemontese, Ben haggles with a boy who wants money to watch Ben's car. Carla knows that Ben will not give up the coins, and that the car will be returned damaged in some way.

Inside the restaurant, Carla broaches the topic of her not wanting to live here, but Ben insists that her presence is important for his job. Ben has no feelings left for Carla, just as hers for him have long diminished. However, he needs her to play the part of wife for the sake of his career. Ben is uninterested in how Carla occupies her time, as long as she is available for certain social functions. Returning to the car after dinner, Carla notes that a hubcap is missing.

Section 3 Analysis

The author uses beautiful imagery, such as the description of the sunset viewed from the restaurant. "The Mediterranean sun hangs expanded like a navel orange about to burst, then drops--the moments between sun and dark miniscule."

There is also symbolism in this section related to Dan's refusal to provide money for protection of the car, which ends in the vehicle missing a hubcap at evening's end. Dan is not willing to invest in anything but himself and leaves Carla and the marriage unprotected, just like the Volkswagen. The missing hubcap mirrors pieces of the marriage, which is eroding.

Section 4

Section 4 Summary

In the absence of a satisfying marriage, Carla agrees to an affair with Mantini. They meet in a room above his crystal shop, once a week. Carla revels in Mantini's attentions. One afternoon, as he rubs scented crime into her skin, Carla talks about Ben's indifference. Mantini tries to tell Carla that separation is part of life and reveals the circumstances of Lucia's death by hemorrhaging after the birth of the baby.

Mantini has also lost his daughter to his mother-in-law, who came for the child after Lucia's death, angry that Mantini would not let Lucia deliver the baby in Italy. The mother-in-law refuses to understand that Lucia loved Mantini and would not return to Italy for any reason.

Mantini tells Carla that Ben is now a player, because of the experiences he has had here in the year before Carla arrived. He probably only pretended to love Carla before they married.

One evening, as Carla and Mantini stand on the balcony of the little room, they hear a loud crash of the store window below being smashed. On the other window, the word "ebreo" which means Jew is written in Arabic. Mantini has been advised to leave because of the political tensions. However, he is tired of moving around, beginning when the Fascists came when he was a small boy in Italy. Mantini has decided to stay but tells Carla that she will be leaving soon.

The next week, Carla's car is attacked, as she drives home from Mantini's store. Fortunately, the police arrive, and she is able to drive home, where an angry Ben is waiting. Ben chastises her for being in the wrong part of town. She tells him that she wants to leave. He pushes her into the terrace railing, cutting her wrist. Carla knows that she cannot leave Tripoli without Ben's permission, and he threatens that she should not think about leaving and jeopardizing his career.

Carla refuses to attend a social function that night, and Ben warns her that things may get more difficult for her. Ben gives Carla an envelope with instructions for evacuating, including a map of Tripoli and a secret route to the air base in the event that he is not available, and the driver does not arrive.

Section 4 Analysis

The author again uses irony when she writes, "'Be still,' Mantini instructs and reaches across her to a small table and lifts a jar of scented crime. He rubs her fingers and toes, one by one, with grave concentration.

'He acts like he's trying to shed one skin and grow another,' Carla says. It's Ben she's trying to make sense of." It is ironic that Carla speaks about Ben wanting to shed his skin through indifference, at the same time that Mantini is massaging crime into Carla's skin during one of their intimate, private afternoons.

There is also irony, when Ben warns Carla that the situation may be getting dangerous, because the Jews are taking water from Jordan. When Carla suggests that the situation may be vice versa, Ben replies that no one really remembers the source of the trouble anymore and flippantly suggests that someone took another man's wife. The implication is that the Jewish Mantini has seduced Carla, just as Ben had seduced Mantini's wife, Lucia.

This section further defines Ben's cool demeanor and disinterest in Carla's welfare. After learning that Carla has been attacked, there are no words of concern, and he tells her only that things are soon to get much worse. The only gesture of support Ben provides is the envelope with the evacuation instructions, "'In case I'm gone and the driver can't make it,' he calls after her, crunching ice in his teeth." Ben's frosty words, delivered through his ice-filled mouth, are appropriate for his coldness toward Carla.

Once more, the author mentions the red hibiscus, this time tumbling out of clay pots in the room above Mantini's shop. To complete the foreshadowing from the beginning of the story, Mantini "pulled a hibiscus bloom from the plant and put it in her hand."

In addition to the red of the hibiscus, the color red figures prominently into the story for its significance both of passion and of danger. At the beginning, as Carla walks towards Mantini's shop, she marks guideposts, such as the shop window with the red bidet, and another with an Air France sign (which shows the French sign with red as one of its colors). The rooster on the street, as well on the one on Carla's skirt, both have the red cockscomb on their heads.

Mantini also describes Lucia's hemorrhage as "clots of blood the color of pomegranates," and will not let Mohammed wash the bloodstains from the steps. Now, when Ben pushes Carla into the terrace railing, she notices that, "There's blood on her wrist, the same color as the hibiscus."

Section 5

Section 5 Summary

Mantini visits Carla's home, and she serves him coffee, remarking that their affair started with his serving her the extremely strong coffee in his shop the first day they met. Mantini asks Carla to leave Ben, because he deserves to be left for his inappropriate abandonment of Carla. Carla tries to clarify if Mantini is proposing to her. Mantini tells Carla that he cannot marry her, because he does not need any more reasons for his mother-in-law to prevent him from seeing his daughter.

In any case, Carla privately processes the scenario of marriage to Mantini. She envisions a life that would also include Mohammed, Mantini's daughter and mother-in-law, plus the fact that she is still Ben's wife. In order to marry Mantini, she would have to leave Tripoli, obtain a divorce, and then return. It all seems too complicated, even if Mantini were to ask her.

On an afternoon excursion, Mantini and Carla drive down the coast to a beach where the couple eats a picnic lunch and then hunts for little treasures in the sand. Carla finds a little piece of glass, resembling a little breast.

Later on, they drive to a deserted ancient Roman city. In a moment of tenderness, Mantini touches Carla's hair and tells her that he needs her.

Section 5 Analysis

Mantini attempts to encourage Carla to leave Ben, just as Ben has abandoned her to pursue his career. However, neither Mantini nor Ben is willing to commit to Carla, completely. She is essentially alone in a place where she has no desire to live.

The trip down the coast symbolizes the scope of the relationship between Mantini and Carla. While they do discover treasures buried in the sand, including the piece of breast-shaped glass, they also visit the remains of a long-abandoned ancient Roman city that signifies the ultimate ruin of their love.

Section 6

Section 6 Summary

Suddenly, without warning, the Six Day War begins. Carla is alone with a dead television set and forced to listen to evacuation plans on the air base broadcasts. Carla quickly packs underclothes, shoes, painkillers, and antibiotics in her large handbag. Carla wants to take some of her personal effects but retrieves a few pieces of mosaic kept from her day at the beach with Mantini.

Before leaving, Carla grabs some apples and bananas, in addition to hundreds of dollars of cash that she pushes into her brassiere.

Fortunately, Carla has the map that Ben had left. She drives hurriedly through unknown streets, trying not to hit the goats and donkeys in the marketplace. Carla reaches the air base and writes a note to whoever should find it to "please contact Gianni Mantini at the Cristalli Shop in Istiklal. Tell him Carla is safe." Carla shoves the note, along with a handful of money, into an envelope and places the envelope under the windshield wiper.

Carla is now safely on a military plane leaving Tripoli. She notices red crescents on the palms of her hands, where her nails had punctured her skin, as she gripped the steering wheel of the car on her frantic drive from the city. From the window of the plane, Carla can see her villa. Soon, she sees Mantini's shop. Carla is torn between the safety of leaving this place and with returning to Mantini to see where there love might have led.

Section 6 Analysis

Once again, Carla bears little bloody spots on her body, as she looks at the places where her fingernails dug into her palms during her wild drive to the air base. The crescent-shaped cuts signify both her need to leave and her desire to stay. In another symbolic gesture, Carla leaves the sterling silver picture frame in favor of bits of glass found at the beach with Mantini and some pieces of fruit, signifying her abandonment of her prior empty life in favor of remembering the sensuous days spent with Mantini.

Section 7

Section 7 Summary

The evacuees land safely in Rome, where Carla reunites with Ben, who had been in Sudan during the evacuation and has just arrived in Rome. A few nights later, as Carla and Ben window shop after dinner, Ben broaches the subject of divorce, as if he were commenting on an article in the shop window.

Carla agrees that a divorce is best and smartly replies that Ben may have custody of the couple's past. Ben admits that he has never liked Carla's smart mouth, and she replies that what Ben really does not like are relationships. There is no discussion about the reason for the end of the marriage, and Ben never confronts Carla about her affair with Mantini, thinking that the shove on the terrace that night served its purpose.

Section 7 Analysis

Carla's abandonment by Ben and her sudden departure from Mantini make her feel unwanted and unsettled. The author writes about Carla and the others, who are, "...dropped like baggage at d'Inghilterra in Rome."

Later, as Ben and Carla walk and talk about divorce, Carla walks with "her eyes on the sidewalk cataloging the detritus there." The author writes that Carla is looking at the loose stones, but she is really viewing her marriage in retrospect, and how it has broken apart over the years to reach this point of disintegration.

Section 8

Section 8 Summary

Mantini's villa is silent and abandoned with Mohammed gone, and the winemaking ceased. There is nothing left for Mantini to do but pack a few things and drive into town. Most of the shops are now empty or abandoned, but Mantini finds a small place to buy coffee and a brioche that he takes back to his shop.

Mantini can smell the rich fragrance of the coffee beans roasting outside and marvels at the crusty brown perfection of the roll on his plate. Mantini is in awe that someone still has the courage and energy to bake amid all the desolation.

Mantini goes into the little room, where he and Carla had spent so much time. He sees the book that she had been reading lying face down. Mantini has second thoughts about his romantic notions about this place and wonders to himself why he acted so bravely and told Carla he would not leave.

Convincing himself that he stayed for his daughter and his business, Mantini turns on the radio, hoping for some news. He sits on the bed in the dark room, as the sound of the crowd grows louder in the square.

Section 8 Analysis

Mantini faces the inevitability of his situation and drives into the city to wait for his fate. For a little while, he has a glimpse of hope that maybe things will be all right, as he marvels at the fresh roll, and the fact that people are still baking and roasting coffee beans. It seems as if everything is normal again because of the presence of these everyday activities.

Mantini has self-doubts and questions his own romantic notions of staying in this place that will certainly mean danger for him. His thoughts return to the practical, when he rationalizes his decision based on Lucia and his business being located here.

Mantini is tired of running because of his religious beliefs. The Fascists chased his family out of Italy, precipitating a childhood running up and down the Mediterranean coastline. There is even the threat of Nazism here through the doctor, whose careless treatment of Lucia after childbirth resulted in her death.

Mantini is so full of life, but he is so weary of everything and everyone that he loves being taken from him. As a result, he will face the consequences of his decision to remain where the Arab-Israeli tensions are erupting, as symbolized by the growing noise of the crowd outside.

Section 9

Section 9 Summary

The Six Days War is as brief as its name and Carla, who is working in Rome at the American Embassy, has been denied her request to return to Libya. It is now late summer and hopes of a return to Tripoli are fading. Nonetheless, Carla still gazes in the direction of Libya every day, as she walks to work.

Carla is employed as a translator, although her real skills are those for which embassies have always hired women, her ability to make important connections through social contacts and to glean information from unsuspecting men caught up in a charming smile.

One night, Carla attends an elegant event at a palazzo, where she mingles among important people and occasionally pauses to admire the grand art. As Carla moves through the room, her eyes land on a group of people surrounding a dignified British man telling a story. As Carla approaches, she hears the man speak of a rampage.

The man turns slightly toward Carla and mentions the Jew with the nice crystal shop. Carla half expects to turn to see Mantini standing there, as if being introduced. Instead, the British man continues to tell the horrific story of how the mob converged on the crystal shop where they found the Jew on the top floor from which were thrown books, flowers and furniture. Carla freezes in fright and has an image of the elegant rooster falling with his wings extended.

Section 9 Analysis

For the last several weeks, Carla has no knowledge of what has happened to Mantini, and her requests to return to Tripoli have been denied. Carla is a survivor, though, and earns a living at the embassy, utilizing her many charms. Mantini is never far from Carla's thoughts, and she looks toward the direction of Libya every day with longing. Then. Suddenly, she hears about Mantini at the cocktail party. Her body freezes, yet her mind imagines the rooster falling with wings extended. Carla knows now that the mob must have thrown Mantini over his own balcony to his death, bringing to closure the foreshadowing of the rooster symbolism throughout the piece.

Characters

Ben

Ben is Carla's husband and is working in Tripoli with the U.S. Embassy. When he leaves abruptly after picking Carla up at the airport, she wonders if he is a spy "or someone who thinks he is a spy." Carla notices that some of his mannerisms have changed since she last saw him, including his style of speaking, and he sports a new moustache.

Ben is a cold man, and he and his wife do not get along very well in Tripoli. He ignores Carla and dislikes what she wears. He may also be a bit of a philanderer, as, according to Mantini, Ben made advances toward his wife, Lucia, during a party, and showed a great deal of interest in her. He is pushy and extracts an invitation from Lucia to come to Villa Cappellini for horseback riding.

Through the eyes of those around him, Ben does not seem to be comfortable living in Libya. Mantini comments that Ben "ate oysters like a barbarian," and Carla notes that he refuses to pay the "block watcher," whose practice of watching their car for small change is an accepted local custom. After Carla is evacuated from Tripoli, Ben asks her for a divorce before he returns to Washington.

Mohammed ben Massud

Mohammed is Carla and Ben's houseboy, "on loan" from Mantini for one day a week. On the other six days of the week, he works in Mantini's house and shop. He disappears from Villa Cappellini just before the Six Day War starts, but Mantini remarks that he does this occasionally—to visit his family, Mantini guesses.

Carla

Carla is the protagonist of the story, and much of it is told through her eyes. She lives in Tripoli with her husband, Ben, who is stationed there with the U.S. Embassy. When she arrives in Tripoli, she is more disturbed by what has changed with her husband than by the newness of the culture in Libya. Carla does not fit in with the other "embassy wives" and spends most of her time alone at the beach or in shops where there are no Americans.

Soon after meeting Mantini in his crystal shop and nearly passing out after drinking his strong coffee, she begins an affair with him. They meet once a week in a small room above his shop.

Carla wants to leave Tripoli when tensions mount due to the impending war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, but Ben refuses to let her, saying that her departure would harm his career. Finally, wives and families are evacuated from Tripoli to Rome, where

Ben meets her and asks for a divorce. She agrees to it and stays in Rome, hoping for a way to return to Tripoli.

Gianni Mantini

Mantini, also called Il Signore, is the Jewish owner of the Cristalli crystal shop in Tripoli and Carla's lover. He is originally from Italy, but his family fled when the fascists came to power before World War II. He has lived in many countries and he speaks many languages. Before Carla's arrival in Tripoli, his wife, Lucia, died of complications after delivering their child. Lucia's mother subsequently took the child back to Italy. He lives at the Villa Cappellini with his servant, Mohammed ben Massud, and also makes wine.

From the moment Mantini meets Carla, he is very attentive and sympathetic toward her, wanting to use expensive cream on her rough hands, serving her coffee, taking care of her when she becomes faint, and offering suggestions about living in Tripoli. He dresses well and comes to Carla for their weekly tryst after his barber appointment, smelling of "the Orient."

When Arab-Israeli tensions mount in Tripoli, Mantini says he will not leave, having left where he was living too many times already in his life. During a party in Rome after she is evacuated from Tripoli, Carla hears someone speaking of how a crowd ransacked Mantini's crystal shop, and she assumes that he was most likely killed in the process.

Lucia Mantini

Lucia was Mantini's wife, who died after delivering their child. She is portrayed in the story as younger than Mantini and very attractive. Mantini tells Carla that Ben attempted to flirt with her but that she did not reciprocate. She was a generous person, as she sent her house servant, Mohammed, to Ben so that he could have his shirts ironed. The entire household still mourns Lucia's death, and she is never far from Mantini's mind.

Vollmer

Vollmer delivered Lucia and Mantini's child, and Mantini blames him for his wife's death. Mantini warns Carla not to go to him, calling him the "Nazi" because he has been in "hiding" in Tripoli since World War II.

Themes

Love and Intimacy

Carla and Mantini pursue a love affair. Their affection for each other is apparent in their actions and in what they say to each other. They keep their weekly appointment with each other to meet above Mantini's shop and spend the afternoon together, making love, listening to music, and simply being with each other. Mantini is affectionate and caring toward Carla, as seen by the way he touches her, acknowledges early in their relationship that she makes him want to send flowers, and shares details of his life with her. Mantini's love helps Carla exchange her anger for "a surge of affection" for things as varied as "smiling Nubian goats" and "the decrepit king and his palace."

Mantini also remembers the love he felt for Lucia, his deceased wife. "We were very much in love," he tells Carla, and he remembers how possessive he felt when Ben once flirted with Lucia. The story opens with Mantini trying to decide whether or not to spend the day reminiscing about Lucia, and his household almost aches with her absence.

Memory and the Past

While the crux of the story takes place in the months just before the Six Day War, both Mantini and Carla spend time remembering past events. Mantini thinks about his wife almost constantly before he falls for Carla, and Carla remembers her life with Ben in the United States, when their life seemed normal. Wetzel writes, "She remembers him in the States, helping her chop onions for the stew, planting dahlias. Jesus." But, as she soon begins to realize, Ben is not the same man she remembers him to be; he has changed his way of speaking, his appearance, and how he acts with her.

Rootlessness

Both Carla and Mantini have moved around quite a bit; Mantini originally because he was an Italian Jew when the fascists came to power, and Carla because she is the wife of an American official who works overseas. In the story's beginning she has a headache from "trying to concoct yet another household." At the end of the story, Carla must again leave her home when she is evacuated to Rome, and Mantini, who refuses to leave even when the conflicts over his being a Jew in an Arab country reach the boiling point, sits above his shop waiting for the angry mob to come for him.

Carla seems to be traveling lightly when she arrives in Tripoli, having brought very little with her from the United States. The furniture she buys for the empty house, "a puzzle of found material," is from a variety of places—"Scandinavian sofa, Italian floor lamps, and a rug from the Fezzan"—and she purchases the pieces with a casualness connoting no feeling of permanent ownership. One of the few things she does bring with

her from America, window drapes, are not the right size, and a crate of household items brought by Ben still sits outside the house, unopened.

Carla's sense of rootlessness is heightened by her feeling that her husband has "abandoned her in this place resembling the set of a French Foreign Legion movie." When the story opens, she is lost, and she never attaches herself to anyone in Tripoli except Mantini, another rootless soul. She avoids the other wives at the embassy, having no interest in their shopping trips and tours. Her husband is always off on secret trips to unknown places, and the map that he gives her in case of an evacuation puts her on unfamiliar roads. When the evacuated wives and families arrive in Rome, they are "dropped like baggage," and when Ben sees her he acts as if Carla's having to leave another home is no big deal.

Relations between Arabs and Jews

Mantini mentions to Carla when he first meets her that he is Jewish and had to leave his native Italy when the fascists came to power before World War II. The fact that he is a Jew living in an Arabic country during a period of tense relations between these two groups creates major conflict in the story. While he and Carla are in the room above his shop one afternoon, he hears the sound of breaking glass and realizes that someone has smashed the front of his shop and written the Arabic word for Jew across the one window that was not destroyed. Mohammed has told him he should leave, but Mantini refuses to, citing the number of times he has already had to flee to another country.

The story ends with Mantini sitting in the room above his shop and waiting for the mob to destroy his shop and probably to take him as well.

Marriage

Carla and Ben's marriage is in trouble in Tripoli. She does not recognize Ben as her husband, thanks to the changes he has made in his behavior and appearance. He is cold to her almost immediately upon greeting her at the airport and unapologetically leaves her alone in a strange city while he goes to Egypt on business. His primary concern seems to be his career, and he expresses no empathy for the stress Carla is experiencing in a new city where tensions are running high.

Through Mantini's reminiscences, Ben's attentions to another woman are revealed. Whenever Ben speaks with Carla it is only to demand that she do something for or with him, as a matter of obligation. Carla tries to engage him in any kind of conversation, even an argument, but she is unsuccessful. When she considers Ben and his behavior in Tripoli, she thinks of him as acting like "he's trying to shed one skin and grow another." They are strangers to each other, and the only time they seem at peace is outside Tripoli, after the evacuation, when they have decided to divorce.

Mantini, on the other hand, seems to have had a strong and loving marriage with Lucia. He obviously adored her, for example having prepared the house with lilies and roses when she returned with their new baby.

Grief

Mantini is grieving for his wife almost immediately as the story begins. He ponders whether he will "spend the day thinking about Lucia or not thinking about Lucia" as he opens his crystal shop. His entire household is still in a deep state of grieving over Lucia's death. When he returns home after work, he notes that the horse "with animal patience . . . awaits Lucia's return." He has not removed from his bedroom the bassinet that once held his infant daughter, now in Italy with his mother-inlaw. Even Mohammed joins Mantini in his grieving, hoping that "somehow they'll enter a room and Lucia's perfume will be there again."

Carla, as well, experiences grief and longing in the story. She has lost her marriage and seems to mourn for the man she thought she married, noting that Ben is the "one thing she'd expected to be reliable." Carla's grief alternates with anger, and she wonders why Ben has brought her to Tripoli. Mantini tells Carla that Ben's experiences have separated him from her.

When Carla must leave Tripoli and Mantini, she begins to grieve for those losses, as well. As she leaves the city, Carla feels as though she would like to "melt through the floor of the plane and fall spinning, down and back," already missing the place she called home for a short time. When she hears of Mantini's death, her grieving for her former lover begins, as "Her heart gives several faltering twists."

Style

Narration

The narration in Wetzel's story shifts primarily between the points of view held by Mantini and Carla. The two characters are not telling the story in first person, but the nearly omniscient narrator allows many of their thoughts to be revealed, as well as their outer actions.

In the beginning of the story, for example, the narrator describes a street scene, then narrows the view down to Mantini's as he opens his shop for the day. Finally, Mantini's desire for a "deep, cold winter to curl up in" is revealed, something that cannot be understood simply by looking at him.

In the next scene, the narrator moves a few yards away to where Carla is standing in the street, trying to figure out the location of Mantini's shop. Again, the narration describes the character's outer behavior and then moves in deeper to look at her thoughts: "The foreign woman tells herself she's not lost." The entire story is told in the third person through the eyes of Carla and Mantini; a scene is never described while looking through Ben's eyes or Mohammed's.

Foreshadowing

Wetzel uses foreshadowing to move the action along in the story and to help tie together disparate scenes. Before Carla has met Mantini, the narrator comments that a man she has not yet met will call her "my flower" in Italian. Later in the story, when they are lovers, he gives her a red hibiscus.

Throughout the story there are allusions to danger and violence, beginning with Mantini's metal gate that protects his shop. When Ben leaves abruptly for Egypt, Carla wonders if he is a spy or "a person who thinks he's a spy." After Mantini forgets to lower his shop's protective gate, and the windows are smashed, he admits to Carla that Mohammed has suggested he leave Tripoli. And when Carla comes home after having her car rocked by a crowd on the street, her husband meets her with instructions on how to leave the city in case an evacuation is necessary. Ultimately, a war erupts between Israel and Arab countries, forcing Carla to leave Libya hurriedly.

Use of a Foreign Language

In a number of places the author uses Italian or Arabic words to foster an exotic and foreign atmosphere in the story. Mantini often speaks Italian to Carla, and those words are included in the text. Because Carla knows Italian, she uses Italian words occasionally, such as when referring to the *farmacia* (a pharmacy) and when she needs to tell Mantini that she is *malato* (*sick*).

Arabic words for common things are often used, and Arabic and Italian place names are frequently employed. Instead of simply writing, for example, that Mantini's shop is on a street, Wetzel gives the street a specific name, Giaddat Istiklal. And when Mantini hears a prayer from a mosque, it is not just any mosque, but the Karamanli mosque.

Structure

The story is divided into nine sections. Each one, except the fourth, contains primarily one scene. The fourth section is a turning point of sorts and moves from Mantini's room, where he and Carla meet; to the street, where Mantini's storefront is destroyed; to the moment when Carla's car is surrounded by a mob; to her confrontation with Ben afterwards when she begs to be allowed to leave Tripoli. In section 5, Mantini asks Carla to leave Ben and live with him, and after that the pace of the story quickens with the onset of the Six Day War and Carla's evacuation from Libya.

Historical Context

Tensions in the Middle East during the 1960s

Hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors have a long history, but the more recent tensions can be traced to 1948, when Israel became a nation in an area that Palestinian Arabs claimed as their own. Fighting almost immediately ensued, culminating in the 1956 Suez-Sinai War, when Israel overran parts of Egypt. Egyptian President Nasser vowed to avenge Arab losses and mobilized Arab states against Israel. Israel preempted a joint Arab attack by launching the Six Day War on June 5, 1967, against neighboring countries Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Almost immediately Israel gained huge amounts of territory, and by the time the war ended on June 10, Israel had captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In a matter of a few days the capitals of all three Arab nations found Israeli troops perilously close, precipitating a quick end to the fighting. Israel more than doubled her original territory, and Israeli military swiftness and strength left an indelible impression on the Arab world.

Advances in Women's Rights in the 1960s

After many years of effort in securing equal rights, including advances during the 1800s and early 1900s resulting in women's right to vote in 1920, American women made substantial gains in the 1960s. Many refer to the 1960s as the second wave of advances in women's rights and the acceptance of feminism. In 1963 Betty Freidan published her landmark book, *The Feminine Mystique.* For this book, Friedan surveyed her female college classmates twenty years after graduation and discovered a world in which educated, middle-class women were being emotionally and intellectually oppressed. The book's popularity was said to have ignited women in their search for meaning beyond the role of homemaker. In 1966 a group of women, including Freidan, established the National Organization for Women (NOW). NOW and other similar organizations created in the 1960s sought to change laws and customs that promoted discrimination against women in areas such as property rights, employment and salaries, and sex and childbearing.

In the 1960s, many women like Carla were rethinking their roles in society, in their families, and in their marriages. Various phenomena, such as sit-ins, protest marches, consciousness-raising exercises, and groups such as NOW, challenged the commonly held idea that a woman's primary function in life was to follow her husband and accept a life focused primarily on providing a home for him. This atmosphere encouraged women to consider the possibility of pursuing independent lives and careers.

Libya in the 1960s

During World War II, Libya was the scene of intense fighting between Italian and German troops and Allied forces. After the war, the country was governed jointly by the British and the French, and it received its independence in 1952. King Idris I, along with an elected parliament, ruled Libya throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In the 1950s, oil was discovered in Libya. The oil boom forced profound changes on the Libyan economy and society, and by the late 1960s oil production reached eighty-five million barrels a month.

In 1953, Libya joined the Arab League, an association of Arabic speaking countries whose stated purpose is to strengthen the ties between Arab countries and promote their common interests. While Libya was not a participant in the Six Day War, the country strongly supported Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in opposition to Israel after the war, through its membership in the Arab League. In fact, Libya provided financial assistance to Jordan and Egypt to help rebuild their economies after the war.

On September 1, 1969, a group of army officers overthrew King Idris' monarchy and established the Libyan Arab Republic. Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi began his control of the Libyan government that continues today.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Sanderson holds a master of fine arts degree in fiction writing and is an independent writer. In this essay, Sanderson examines how Wetzel uses senseladen prose to create a vivid setting for her short story and to delineate the choice Carla must make between her previous life and a new life.

From the first sentence of Marlene Reed Wetzel's "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," the setting of Carla's crumbling marriage and concurrent romance with the exotic Mantini is firmly foreign. The tale opens with a symphony of street sounds: "horns and radios, bicycle bells, the voice of a rooster that the pots-and-pans man keeps as a pet. . . . the call to prayer from the Karamanli mosque hangs in the air." This is a scene full of life and activity, echoed a few paragraphs down, when Carla's first appearance in the story is heralded with colors and strong images: "White light glances off buildings . . . Shadows fall thick, full of substance. . . . she's the color of a figure in a Titian painting . . . a blood-red hibiscus in her hand." This robust use of sensual language tells the story of Carla's evolution from a woman who follows her husband, "trying to concoct yet another household," to a woman who knows she is "attractive and clever at making connections."

The scenes featuring Ben, Carla's husband, are in striking contrast to those with Mantini, her lover. The two men are almost perfect opposites. Ben's scenes are almost free from any life-affirming material, a far cry from Mantini's scenes that are played out in colors and sounds vibrant enough for a Technicolor, wide-screen movie. Despite her few protestations against Ben's dictums, all indications are that Carla, before coming to Tripoli, has played the role of the good wife. Ben's neglectful treatment of her, and the intense feelings she experiences (with and without Mantini) after coming to Tripoli, push Carla toward reconsidering her life and future. How Wetzel describes the two men in her life, and their surroundings, makes clear the choice Carla must make in order to find out who she really is.

When Ben first appears, he is meeting Carla at the airport. They have not seen each other for quite some time, but the atmosphere around their meeting is nothing short of dismal. Carla arrives in Tripoli "needing a toilet, in a room filled with ragged cats, unclaimed people and bags, an abandoned cage of birds." No doubt, she identifies with her fellow travelers in this landscape: ragged, unclaimed, and abandoned. Though there is a bird in this scene, it does not sing. Even after she finds Ben, Carla is "disoriented and dizzy," clutching her handbag and passport "desperately." Wetzel writes with a heavy hand in this passage, and there is no joy between the husband and wife, seeing each other after a long period of separation; no gentle touches or soft words are exchanged.

Compared to her lifeless meeting with Ben, Carla's first meeting with Mantini is exuberant and animated. Here, when Wetzel uses the image of cats, they are not "ragged," but are applied to describe Mantini's "graceful" way of walking. When he sees Carla he takes both of her hands in greeting, and then, "as he holds onto her arm, he

thinks how nice it would be to rub her rough hands and feet . . . with something perfumed, something expensive in a beautiful jar from Paris." Carla notices Mantini, as well, "an attractive man in a suit tailored by a genius." Her senses go into overdrive, taking him in as "Dark and Levantine . . . surrounded by a lemony fragrance. . . . so unself-consciously *physical.*" The only clue as to Ben's looks is Carla's note that he has a new moustache that looks fake and as if it is going to fall off.

The images of the interiors belonging to each man also differ. In a letter to Carla, Ben has described their home in Tripoli as an exotic villa, but when she actually sees the place its reality does not match up. "The truth," Carla notes, is that the villa is a "white flat-roofed house . . . very empty." One of the few pieces of furniture it does contain is a rocking chair, a homey icon that mocks Carla and her lack of a stable and loving family life.

In contrast, nearly every place Mantini inhabits is alive with color and scents and sounds that connote life. When Carla enters Mantini's crystal shop, Cristalli Imports, she is greeted with the smell of sandalwood and music from a radio. At her house there does not seem to be any sound of life; the houseboy, Mohammed, chooses to bring his own radio when he comes once a week to iron Ben's shirts. Mantini's shelves are filled with "shimmering glass," and when he speaks the name of a brand of crystal, "The word rests on Carla like a jewel in a décolletage. She sees svelte women, parties, and expensive wines served in Baccarat."

The room above Mantini's shop, where he and Carla meet each week to pursue their love affair, is also a feast for the eyes, ears, and nose. Their bed is covered with a fringed Pakistani spread, ashtrays "overflow half-smoked Dunhills," a radio plays songs with such titles as "Moonlight in Vermont" and "The Pines of Rome," and red geraniums and hibiscus "tumble out of clay pots." When Mantini is with Carla in the room he smells like "the Orient" and tastes like almonds.

Mantini's home, Villa Cappellini, is also described in somewhat vivid terms, but they are more subdued. This is because, when Mantini first meets Carla, he is still in mourning for his wife, Lucia, who died after the birth of their daughter. But, despite the respectful air that imbues Villa Cappellini, Wetzel still paints the household with careful animation. Banana trees "rustle," and the house is busy with animals and Mohammed and vivid memories of Mantini's deep love for Lucia.

Exterior scenes associated with Ben continue to be lifeless and dull. When he and Carla eat at a restaurant, the moment is riddled with images of sickness and failure. Ben argues with a man who, according to custom should be allowed to watch their car, and when they return to the car a hubcap is missing. Carla sees a cat that is "crusty-eyed" and tries to feed it, only to have Ben kick it out of the way. They are too early for dinner at the restaurant, and are alone and "forlornly American." Not sufficiently nourished while eating with her husband, Carla rummages around their refrigerator at home only to find mayonnaise, leftover chicken, and "Clorox-rinsed now-brown lettuce."

On the other hand, her excursions with Mantini are almost luscious in comparison. They eat marinated squid, bread, and tomatoes, and drink red wine at a "protected lagoon." Afterward, they dig for treasures and Roman artifacts at the water's edge, coming up with such finds as "a piece of iridescent glass. . . . looking like a little breast."

After months of seeing the differences between the two men, Carla moves from being a woman who is simply a helpmate to one who acknowledges her sensuality and sexuality and her power and value as an individual. She is no longer a woman who walks behind her husband, "Middle Eastern style," but a woman who can, at least mockingly, call herself "a player." At the end of the story she moves through a cocktail party by herself with a sense of assurance. Although she is pained by the discovery that Mantini's shop has been destroyed by a mob, and that he is most likely dead, there is a sense that she has found new strength.

Source: Susan Sanderson, Critical Essay on "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," in *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

Norvell is an independent writer who has published short fiction and often writes about literature. In this essay, Norvell discusses how the characters in Wetzel's story reflect the pre-feminist period in which the story is set.

Marlene Reed Wetzel's story is set in 1967, a few years before the modern feminist movement began gaining momentum in the 1970s. One of the things that makes Wetzel's story coherent and successful is that its characters are unfailingly true to their time. They are thoroughly and consistently prefeminist in their attitudes and behaviors. Today's reader does not read them as modern characters, although they were created less than forty years ago and appear in a story that seems modern in many other ways, from its global air travel to its unblinking portrayal of adultery and divorce. As different as Carla, Ben, and Mantini are from one another, they have one thing in common: The idea that a woman might have as much social and economic independence as a man—as much control over her own life—never occurs to any of them.

Ben, of course, is the least sympathetic of the three. He has summoned Carla to live with him in Tripoli because it will be good for his career to have his wife at his side, in addition to being convenient to have her to oversee the house, laundry, and other domestic matters. He has not called her because he misses her, and he has not given any thought to whether she wants to live in Tripoli, what her life there will be like, or even if she will be safe there. She asks, "Exactly why am I here?" and he answers flatly, "It's my job." Her wishes and feelings are not considered, because she is a wife, which means that her life revolves around her husband's desires and his career. If the story were set today, Carla might not be free to move to Tripoli because of her own career commitments, or she might simply decline to move because of her own concerns about boredom, loneliness, or a lack of safety. Such possibilities, however, are not part of the world in which Carla lives.

Instead of introducing Carla to local culture himself, Ben gives Carla the telephone number of the embassy where he works and tells her, "They'll tell you anything you need to know." Not only does Ben not treat Carla as an equal, he does not treat her as a treasured family member or even as a valued guest. He treats her as a functionary who is there to serve him but not to inconvenience him. He shows no concern for her safety in a foreign country that is on the verge of violence, much less for her comfort or happiness.

It's not that Ben is too shallow and self-centered to realize that he cares for Carla; he truly does not care about her. When she is attacked by a mob and saved just in time by the police, Carla, understandably, tells Ben that she wants to leave Libya. The fact that she is obviously in danger has no impact on Ben whatsoever. His answer is, "You'd better think twice before ruining my career."

Ben treats Carla rudely and callously, and Carla dislikes and disrespects him. Yet it is Ben, not Carla, who initiates their divorce. In this, as in all else, Ben leads, and Carla

follows. It seems that she would have stayed with him indefinitely, regardless of how she was treated or how she felt about him, if he had not divorced her.

Mantini is a very different kind of man. He genuinely cares for Carla, as he did for his recently deceased wife. His speech and his manner are as sweet as Ben's are bitter. Mantini calls Carla cara (dear) the first time he meets her, and when he notices that her hands show that she has been scrubbing, he wants to rub lotion on them. When Carla becomes ill, he refuses to let her drive and provides a carriage to take her home. In direct contrast to this, Ben gives Carla a map to follow in the event of emergency evacuation. Ben predicts, correctly, that neither he nor the hired driver will be available to help Carla. He expects her to be submissive and dependent when it suits him but independent enough to take care of herself when she would otherwise be an inconvenience to him.

While Mantini's approach to Carla is gentle, warm, and caring, he, like Ben, immediately and automatically takes an authoritarian tone and position toward her. Upon first meeting her, he gives her unasked for advice that is personal and borders on being intimate, saying, "Don't go to the beach in a tiny swimsuit. . . . If you need a lady's doctor, don't go to the Nazi." He also takes physical liberties with her, putting her head in his lap when she is ill. Here his concern takes a rather brazen form. Mantini's actions clearly telegraph that he expects to do as he pleases with Carla. From the beginning, he is seducing her with complete assurance that she will be compliant. And Carla, far from being offended by his taking advantage of her vulnerability while ill and using it as an occasion for sudden physical intimacy, experiences Mantini's attentions as healing. "Her heartbeat steadies, surely due to the infusion of civility," Wetzel writes. Carla does not mind that Mantini is making all the choices in their relationship and ignoring normal social boundaries, because such behavior is what she is accustomed to. The fact that Mantini's treatment of her is based at least partly on appreciation for her is enough to make him seem a refuge in her eyes. At least Mantini, when he looks at her, sees a human being, acknowledges and acts upon her feelings, and shows that he takes delight in her. That his behavior is inappropriate and driven partly by his own loneliness and lust is far outweighed, in Carla's mind, by his kindness.

Mantini's concern for Carla's needs and feelings is limited, however. Later in the story, Mantini encourages Carla to leave Ben and come live with him. She asks if he is proposing marriage, and he says that he is not. He explains that if he were to marry Carla, this would affect his right to see his daughter. Once again, Carla is expected to subject herself to a man's other commitments and his needs. She is expected to accept a relationship without the possibility of marriage because this is in his best interest. Interestingly, the narrator reports that Carla's response to this is not that it sounds unfair or unacceptable but that "it sounds complicated." It is as if in some vague, unarticulated way, she knows that something is not quite right here, but she is so accustomed to being a mere accessory in men's lives that she does not fully understand her discomfort.

It is easy for Carla to grasp that Ben's treatment of her is degrading, because he is cold, uncaring, and blatantly disrespectful. Mantini, though, is not as easy to read. He offers

warmth and caring, yet Carla understands her position in his life enough to suspect that, if she agreed to live with him, she might end up "taking care of Mantini and Mohammed. Maybe she'd have to wash all of those heavy pots while they smoked out on the loggia." She has enough life experience to know that, whether a man is kind or unkind, her role in his life will be essentially the same.

At the end of the story, Carla is in Rome. Ben has told her of his intention to divorce her and has left. Carla has gotten a job at the embassy in Rome. A modern reader might expect that Carla has finally declared her independence—that she has decided to make a career and a life for herself. But the narrator reveals that she is remaining in Rome only in hopes of getting a visa to return to Mantini in Tripoli. When her husband leaves her, the only path Carla can see is one that leads back to another man. This, in spite of the fact that Mantini does not offer marriage and lives in an unstable, violent country far from her own—a country to which she did not want to go in the first place.

Mantini's death at the end of the story represents more than just the loss of a lover for Carla; it is the loss of the hub around which she had hoped to rebuild her life. As Mantini's appearance had steadied her heart when they met, his loss now causes her heart to give "several faltering twists." Carla is alone in a world that has not yet heard feminism's renewed call for women to be mistresses of their own fates. Her ability to maintain her balance and to find her direction in life depends on a connection to a man, because in her world a man is the source of a woman's direction. The story's abrupt ending is an apt metaphor for the void into which Carla fell when Mantini was hurled from his balcony.

Source: Candyce Norvell, Critical Essay on "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," in *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #3

Johnson is an instructor of creative writing, composition, and literature. In this essay, Johnson considers Wetzel's story in relation to the longstanding Middle Eastern conflict.

Marlene Reed Wetzel's "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" is the story of a woman coping with a dying marriage and a budding love affair set in a politically unstable region.

The discord of the region is reflected in the triangle of Carla, Mantini, and Ben. Just as Arabs and Jews struggle over property, Ben and Mantini struggle for its human counterpart, Carla. Woman as a commodity is nothing new in literature, and is clearly seen in "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" on the night Mantini and Ben first meet. Ben manages to move his chair close to Lucia Mantini and engages her in conversation. After dancing with her, he returns her to the table where her husband waits. Mantini then "deliberately put his hand on the back of his wife's neck. His fingers played with the gold chain against her warm, fragrant flesh to show his possession, to make the American envy him more." Immediately following this statement and reinforcing the notion of women as property, the author says, "Now no one owns Lucia. She rests where he can't follow." This ironic statement also foreshadows Mantini's own death.

Multiple reminders of the trio's foreignness serve the dual purpose of foreshadowing—or providing the reader with subtle clues of events to come—future incidents in their lives and representing the adversarial positions in which many ethnic and cultural groups in the Middle East found themselves. Of the three, Carla is the person most foreign to Libya. She is foreign by nationality, by religion (we can assume that she is neither Islamic nor Jewish), and most of all, by gender. Her difference is emphasized repeatedly early in the story. As she makes her way to Mantini's crystal shop, she is referred to as the "foreign woman." Conflicting sights and sounds assault her senses, reminding her that she is a stranger in a strange land. She parks her car "behind a string of camels tied up near Cathedral Square." The incongruity of this combination is reinforced when Carla marks her return path by observing a red bidet (an apparatus much like a toilet, designed for washing one's genitals) showcased in a shop window. While seeing a bidet in the bathroom of a home or hotel would not be unusual, seeing one (and a red one at that) in a shop window is. Because red is associated with passion and a bidet is associated with genitals, we can interpret the sight as foreshadowing the affair Carla and Mantini will soon embark upon. The city is also a cacophony of sounds that seem out of place to Carla. A discordant mix of "horns and radios, [and] bicycle bells" would pass unnoticed in most urban areas, but the distinctive sound of a rooster crowing in the city would be unusual.

In addition to what Carla sees and hears, her foreignness is apparent physically. The author describes her as being the color of a "titian" painting in a land of darker skinned people. Titian was a sixteenth century painter known for his use of color. Because Mantini cautions her against the sun, her skin is probably quite fair. Carla's behavior marks her as foreign also. In a country where women are treated more like men's property than their equals, she does what other women do not—she travels around the

city alone. Her solitude is emphasized by Wetzel's description of the "embassy wives who travel as one sun-hatted flock." Her difference is again emphasized as she makes her way to Mantini's shop for the first time. One of the Arab men who "squat against shop fronts, smoking" notes her passing by making wordless clicking sounds. These sounds can be construed as disapproving or disrespectful since they precede the description of her as being light skinned.

Ben is also foreign, but he occupies a particular niche in that he is male and in the country in an official capacity. He apparently changes personalities with places, developing an accent here, growing a mustache there. He lives in Libya as if the Libyan people were there to serve him, or at the very least, as if they should adapt to his ways. His tunnel vision is illustrated when he and Carla go to the *Ristorante Piemontese.* Although he has been in the country far longer than Carla, he refuses to play by the rules natives have set down. In order for his car to be protected while he and Carla dine, he needs to give a small amount of money to the "block watcher." He refuses, and as a result returns to find a hubcap stolen. Further evidence of Ben's foreignness is in Mantini's observation that he "ate oysters like a barbarian." It seems that Ben does not so much adapt to the country as he adapts to an image of himself in that country. Again seen through Mantini's eyes, Ben is a man "working at being more interesting than he really was, affected, wearing an Englishman's tidy little mustache."

Ben's behavior and his relationship with Carla foreshadow violence. Sometimes this foreshadowing is in the form of language synonymous with fighting. For example, when Ben argues with the block watcher at the *Ristorante Piemontese,* we see his "hands . . . in the air quarreling." Shortly afterward, Carla "wants to pick a fight [with Ben], better in her estimation than silent hostility." The silent hostility between the two is echoed by the fermenting antagonism in the Middle East.

It is ironic that Mantini, who is male and more closely resembles the Libyan people, is the character who dies. He is a Jew, however, and it is that difference that will result in his death. Wetzel illlustrates Mantini's foreignness and the danger inherent in it in subtle ways. First, Carla sees his masculine appeal and notes that he is "unselfconsciously physical," a trait she attributes to his Mediterranean background. Libya, too, is on the Mediterranean, but we know Wetzel associates Mantini's sexuality with his Italian background because he has been speaking to Carla in Italian. Second, when Carla makes her initial visit to the crystal shop, she wears a dress with a rooster on the front. The sexuality and fertility represented by the rooster connect it to Mantini, but it is also representative of Mantini's difference. Just as the rooster Carla heard earlier seemed out of place in the city, Mantini, a Jew, is out of place in an Arab country. Regardless of how long he might remain, he will always be Jewish, never Arab. The association between Mantini and the rooster is cemented at the end of the story when Carla hears of Mantini's death and pictures him as an "elegant rooster."

Mantini's occupation as a Jewish shopkeeper who sells crystal also foreshadows coming violence. The merchandise he sells evokes images of the Holocaust, the attempted extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazi regime prior to and during World War II. The beginning of that tragic period in history is traditionally traced to an

event referred to as *Kristallnacht,* or Night of Broken Glass, when all the synagogues in Germany were set on fire, windows of Jewish shops were smashed, and thousands of Jews were arrested. *Kristallnacht* is echoed when Mantini's window is smashed and the word "Jew" written on the remaining window.

Mantini provides another important element that suggests impending war when he gives the novel *Exodus* to Carla. Published in the 1950s by Leon Uris, *Exodus* details the relationship between an American woman and an Israeli freedom fighter during the struggle for Palestine. The word "exodus" is generally synonymous with flight from oppression and danger. More specifically, it is a term for the flight of Jews from Egyptian slavery, as told in the Old Testament book by the same name. The title not only foreshadows Carla's own flight from Tripoli but also brings to mind Mantini's previous flights from persecution.

Each character in the story exhibits some degree of the stealth and deceit necessary in any planned act of violence. Both Mantini and Carla comment on Ben's underhanded manner. Carla knows Ben would rather attack from behind than talk face to face about their problems. In addition, although Ben's letters to her describe a villa, what Carla finds is a "white, flat-roofed house with high ceilings." Mantini tells Carla of his first meeting with Ben, describing the way Ben insinuated himself into Lucia's good graces, whispering secrets to her and "stealthily maneuvering his chair closer to Lucia." In a different conversation, Mantini places Ben's deceptiveness in a larger context when he surmises that the American "learned state secrets, yes? He probably knows every detail of the Libyan government. . . . Certainly about Israel." Ben is also compared to a serpent, the original Judeo-Christian deceiver. He is pictured as snake-like, "trying to shed one skin and grow another;" related to this image is Carla's belief that her husband is "wearing someone else's personality." She wonders if Ben is a spy or perhaps just "a person who thinks he's a spy," thus deceiving even himself.

Carla and Mantini deceive Ben as they conduct their love affair, but Mantini, like Ben, is guilty of self-deception. In Mantini's case, however, this deception is far more dangerous than Ben's. As part of a family forced to flee persecution more than once, he should be aware of the dangers of being Jewish in an Arab country. Nevertheless, he refuses to leave, even going so far as to "laugh and laugh" at the suggestion. His self-deception not only cost him his life, but that of his wife. He no doubt knew about Nazis from World War II, yet he allowed his pregnant wife to be treated by a Nazi physician, who failed to perform an essential task in delivering a child—making sure the placenta had been completely removed. Finally, Mantini has a metal gate designed to protect his shop and merchandise, yet he sometimes neglects to put it in place.

Wetzel, in "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," has created a work that is intricately constructed and resistant to over simplification. She has avoided placing blame for the troubles in the Middle East and also avoided placing blame for the demise of Ben and Carla's marriage. In the same way Jews and Arabs must take equal responsibility for violence past, present, and future, Mantini, Carla, and Ben must each bear a certain amount of responsibility for the breakup of a marriage. "A Map of Tripoli, 1967" illustrates the reality of the personal and the global: There are no easy solutions.

Source: Carol Johnson, Critical Essay on "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," in *Short Stories for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Topics for Further Study

There are many things the author does not reveal about the main characters in this story. Choose one of the characters and write a five-hundred word biography covering his or her life up to the time of the story.

Create a timeline that shows the major events occurring between Israel and its Arab neighbors from Israel's official inception as a state in 1948 to the present day. Then, create a timeline that tracks the major events in the women's rights movement from the 1960s to the present day. See how these two major historical themes from the story relate chronologically.

Find a map of Tripoli from the 1960s and locate as many landmarks from the story as you can (the airport, Ben and Carla's house, Mantini's crystal shop). Are the street names mentioned by the author factual? Trace how Carla might have driven from her home to Mantini's shop and from her house to the airport when she evacuated the city. If you are not able to find a map from the 1960s, find a current one and see if it matches the author's descriptions or if the city has changed a great deal.

During the 1960s, the Libyan monarchy welcomed American oil companies and other businesses. Since the 1970s, when Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi began ruling Libya, relations between the United States and his country have seriously deteriorated. Do some research to learn the current state of U.S.-Libyan relations. Write a one page summary of your findings.

Compare and Contrast

1960s: Many women in the United States begin to question their traditional roles in society as strictly wives and mothers. Women consider careers in areas previously dominated by men, such as medicine, law, and politics. The percentage of female medical school students in the United States increases from 5.8 percent in 1961 to 10.9 percent in 1971.

Today: Women make up slightly more than 45 percent of the entering class in U.S. medical schools. By 2010, the American Medical Women's Association predicts, the figure will reach at least 50 percent.

1960s: King Idris I, along with an elected parliament, rules Libya. The Libyan oil boom is beginning, and Libya encourages American and other foreign companies to enter the country to drill for oil.

Today: Libya's full name is the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. It is ruled by Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, who has decreed that all businesses must be owned by Libyans. The country's relationship with the United States has deteriorated in the past twenty years, and the United States no longer has an embassy in Tripoli. The country's principal resource is still petroleum.

1960s: In 1967, Israel fights the Six Day War against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, seizing large amounts of land from each of its three adversaries.

Today: Tensions still exist between Israel and the Arab nations, and violent clashes erupt on a regular basis between Israeli forces and Arabs living in the areas annexed after the Six Day War.

Further Study

Faqih, Ahmad, ed., *Libyan Stories,* Kegan Paul International, 2000.

Ahmad Faqih has collected thirteen stories by various prominent Libyan writers, which were published during the 1970s and 1980s in the London magazine Azure.

Mattawa, Khaled, *Ismailia Eclipse: Poems,* Sheep Meadow, 1997.

Khaled Mattawa immigrated to the United States from Libya in 1979, when he was fifteen years old. His poetry is rooted in both United States and Arab cultures.

Vandewalle, Dirk, *Libya since Independence: Oil and State-Building,* Cornell University Press, 1998.

This book supplies a detailed analysis of Libya since 1951 based on the author's work in Libya and on interviews with some of the country's most important officials.

Bibliography

Fishback, Doug, "On the Map," in the *University of Tulsa Magazine,* Winter 2000, pp. 28-29.

Wetzel, Marlene, "A Map of Tripoli, 1967," at *Amazon.com,* http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/44460/ suspensenet/002-0069686-1784843 (last accessed November 5, 2002).

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Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Short Stories for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

Editor, Short Stories for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535