Men in White Study Guide

Men in White by Sidney Kingsley

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Introduction

Men in White, originally presented by the Group Theatre in New York in 1933, was Sidney Kingsley's first play. The drama focuses on the personal sacrifices required by the medical profession. The main theme of the play is summed up in one of the doctor's final utterances: "It's not easy for any of us. But in the end our reward is something richer than simply living. Maybe it's a kind of success that world out there can't measure . . . maybe it's a kind of glory."

Men in White grew out of Kingsley's longstanding interest in the medical field. As he explained more than fifty years later in *Sidney Kingsley, Five Prizewinning Plays,* "I worked and spent an enormous amount of time in the hospitals of New York and was so impressed with the study of the history of medicine and the achievements made in the previous decade." Kingsley witnessed firsthand those doctors he applauded in his dedication, "the men in medicine who dedicate themselves, with quiet heroism, to man." Kingsley's diligent research paid off in his writing; theatergoers, critics, and the medical community alike responded favorably to the realism and idealism that forms the backbone of *Men in White*.

The play also started Kingsley's tradition of dealing with significant social issues—issues that many other writers were unwilling to explore or even raise. A pivotal plot twist in which a young woman dies of a botched abortion gave Kingsley the opportunity to speak out in support of legalized abortion, a practice that was not adopted in the United States until 1973. As Nena Couch points out in her introduction to *Sidney Kingsley, Five Prizewinning Plays,* "In Men in White Kingsley did what was clearly characteristic of him and what has marked his long career—to present on the stage a major human concern boldly and without apology or disguise."

Author Biography

Kingsley was born Sidney Kirshner on October 22, 1906, in New York, New York. While attending high school, he began writing one-act plays, directing, and acting. He won a scholarship to Cornell University, where he continued to write and direct plays. In 1928, the same year in which he earned his bachelor of arts degree, he won an award for the best student one-act play.

After graduation, Kingley acted with the Tremont Stock Company in the Bronx, New York. Deciding that he would never be a great actor, Kingsley moved in 1929 to California. He worked as a scenario reader in the movie business. At the same time, he continued working on a play called Crisis. This play opened in 1933 in New York under a new title, *in White.* play was a critical and commercial success both in the United States and London, and it won the 1934 Pulitzer Prize in drama.

Throughout the rest of the 1930s, Kingsley wrote three more plays: *Dead End* (1935) was a Broadway success, but *Ten Million Ghosts* (1936) and *The World We Make* (1939) both were considered failures. In 1939, Kingsley also married the actress Madge Evans, who would appear in several of his later plays.

Kingsley wrote five more plays in the 1940s and 1950s. Both *The Patriots* (1943) and *Darkness at Noon* (1951) were given New York Circle of Critics Awards. *Night Life* (1962) was the last complete work that Kingsley presented on the stage. *The Art Scene* (1969) was part one of an unfinished trilogy.

From 1962 until his death in 1995, Kingsley remained an active participant in the theatrical community. He was a member of the influential Dramatists Guild, serving as its president and vice president. He also sat on the board of directors of the Cafe La Mama Experimental Theatre Club. Kingsley died on March 20, 1995, in Oakland, New Jersey, following a stroke. The Dramatists Guild Fund presented the first annual Evans-Kingsley Awards for significant achievement in 1999.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Men in White opens in the library of a metropolitan hospital where members of the staff are gathered. Hochberg, the chief of the surgical staff, and Ferguson, an intern, are discussing Mr. Hudson, a wealthy patient who is about to be discharged. Ferguson is engaged to Hudson's daughter Laura. After the couple marry, they plan to go to Vienna, where he will study surgery. The following year, he will return to work with Hochberg. Ferguson finds out that he needs to stay at the hospital with one of his patients. He agrees to break his evening plans with Laura. Then an emergency calls him to the operating room.

Scene 2 opens in Hudson's hospital room, which Hochberg and Laura soon enter, and they discuss the demands of the medical profession. Hochberg points out that the next five years are crucial to Ferguson's career as a surgeon. After Ferguson joins the group, he and Laura are soon left alone. When he tells her that he has to cancel their plans for that evening, she gets very upset. She tells him that she cannot put up with his demanding schedule much longer. She threatens to break their engagement if he does not promise to forgo his studies with Hochberg and instead open a private practice after returning from Vienna. Before they can discuss the situation in depth, Ferguson has to run off to attend to an emergency.

Ferguson has been called to see a young diabetic who has lost consciousness. When he arrives at her room, he finds the girl's own doctor, Cunningham, is already there. The two doctors disagree on the diagnosis. Cunningham believes the girl has slipped into a diabetic coma and orders insulin, but Ferguson thinks she has gone into shock. The men argue, and when Cunningham hesitates, Ferguson wrests the hypo of insulin from him and takes charge of the patient. His diagnosis proves correct and the patient recovers, but Cunningham threatens to report him nonetheless. After Cunningham leaves, Ferguson offers to give the nurse, Barbara, some medical notes for an exam. Before moving on to his next patient, he promises to leave the notes on the first floor for her.

Later that evening, Ferguson, who has retired to his room, has a brief conversation with Laura in which she asks him to make a decision about their future. A former student of Hochberg's named Levine, who is now in private practice, enters. He wants Ferguson to check on some specimens from his wife that he left with Hochberg. Ferguson arranges for the results to be sent down. While they wait, Levine tells the younger man that he once had the chance to work with Hochberg, but instead he married and went into practice to support his wife. His life since then has been exceedingly difficult, and he wonders if he made the right decision. Ferguson explains that being a doctor has always been the only thing he wanted to do, even if he has to put aside personal pleasures to accomplish this goal. The orderly then brings in the lab results, which confirm that Levine's wife has tuberculosis.

After Levine leaves, Barbara arrives for the notes, which Ferguson forgot to leave for her. Barbara volunteers to go speak with the hospital administrators if Cunningham tries to get Ferguson in trouble. They talk briefly about patients and the hard work the hospital requires. Ferguson kisses Barbara but then tells her that he is going up to the ward and she had better leave. However, after he has departed, she sits on the bed, waiting for him to return.

Act 2

Three months have passed when act 2 opens. The hospital committee is meeting to discuss the perilous financial situation of their institution. Hudson is prepared to join as a new trustee and will provide the hospital much-needed funds. In return for his donation, the hospital needs to offer Ferguson an associateship. Hochberg objects that such an appointment is not possible because Ferguson is not yet qualified for the job. The other members of the committee do not see the problem because, with Hudson's connections, they believe Ferguson can develop a lucrative practice. Much to Hochberg's surprise, Ferguson already has informed one of the committee members that he is delighted with the plan.

Coming from their wedding rehearsal, Ferguson and Laura enter the library in high spirits. Ferguson tells Laura that he is looking forward to the associateship appointment. Although he hopes to talk to Hochberg before the committee brings it up, when Hochberg enters the library, Ferguson realizes that he is too late. Ferguson and Laura try to make Hochberg understand that they want to have time for each other, but Hochberg remains unhappy with the decision. Their conversation is interrupted by the news that Barbara is ill with a serious infection resulting from an illegal abortion. She may need surgery. Ferguson heads out for the operating room. After he leaves, Hochberg suggests that Laura observe the surgery. He hopes it may make her understand how important Ferguson's work is. She agrees.

As Barbara is being prepared for surgery, Ferguson asks one of the nurses why Barbara never came to him for help. He says that he would never have let her go to a dangerous abortionist. Barbara is now completely alone, for she has no family and she will be thrown out of the nursing program. After examining Barbara, Hochberg orders a hysterectomy as the only hope of saving her life. The doctors head for the operating room. One of the nurses brings Laura into the operating room, and then Barbara is wheeled in. When Ferguson approaches Barbara, she asks him to take care of her and tells him that she loved him. Laura realizes that Ferguson is the one who got Barbara pregnant, and Ferguson admits to the affair. Starting to cry, Laura leaves the operating room, and the operation begins.

Act 3

The next day Hochberg finds Ferguson in his room. Ferguson stayed up all night with Barbara, and now her temperature has fallen. Ferguson tells Hochberg that he plans to

ask Barbara to marry him—Laura refuses to speak to him and Barbara is alone in the world with little future. Hochberg questions Ferguson's decision, pointing out the difficulties of going into private practice. Hochberg cannot convince Ferguson to change his mind, however. Ferguson even declares that he will give up medicine, if he must, to support Barbara. Then Laura comes in to see Hochberg. Ignoring Ferguson, she tells Hochberg that she is planning to sail to Europe that evening. Hochberg reveals Ferguson's plans to marry Barbara and then leaves. Ferguson and Laura talk about what has happened. Ferguson says he has no choice; he is responsible for the destruction of Barbara's life so he must help her. Laura admits that she was acting selfishly by making Ferguson give up his dreams of being a surgeon. She admits that she stills loves him. Then Hochberg returns with the news that Barbara has died. Laura wants Ferguson to go with her and talk things over. Ferguson refuses, saying that he belongs at the hospital. He has made the decision to devote himself to medicine.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

In the library of a large urban hospital several doctors and interns study, relax, and talk amongst themselves. Dr. Hochberg comes in looking for Ferguson. One of the interns, Michaelson, goes to the phones and makes a call. As a senior physician, Dr. Gordon asks Hochberg for a consultation and another intern checks on a referral. Hochberg agrees to see Gordon's patient and advises against an operation for the referral. Hochberg and Gordon talk about meeting for dinner and Hochberg asks whether it would upset Gordon's wife's plans. Gordon says it won't and goes to call her. Hochberg then speaks with an elderly doctor, McCabe, who talks about struggling to keep up with all the medical journals. They comment about the ways of young doctors with McCabe wondering how they can keep up and Hochberg saying how dedicated they are.

Ferguson and another doctor, Wren, come in arguing about procedure for a particular patient. Ferguson convinces Wren to try it his way and Wren leaves followed by McCabe for whom Ferguson holds open the door. Ferguson and Hochberg compare notes on the research project they're working on and then Ferguson asks Gordon to look at a patient they have in common that Gordon seems to think is a terminal case. Hochberg mentions to Ferguson they're sending a patient named Hudson home shortly adding that he's already calling his daughter Laura. An intern nicknamed Shorty shouts out that there's a call for Ferguson and Ferguson goes to the phone. Hochberg tells Gordon that Ferguson is going to be a fine doctor someday.

A shabbily dressed young man comes in carrying an x-ray envelope and goes to Hochberg, who after a moment recognizes him as Dr. Levine and introduces him to Gordon, who immediately leaves. Levine asks Hochberg to look the x-rays he's brought and as Hochberg is examining them Ferguson finishes his phone call and joins them. He and Hochberg react with concern to a spot on the lung shown in the x-ray and ask whether Levine has brought a sputum (spit) sample. Levine gives them one in a small jar. Ferguson promises to have it tested immediately and tells Levine he can come by and get the results that evening. He then recognizes Levine as a former student and they discuss Ferguson's plans to study surgical techniques in Vienna. Further conversation reveals that Ferguson is planning to marry Laura Hudson and that she's going to Vienna with him. Levine and Hochberg comment that it will be difficult studying while being newly married with Hochberg mentioning that once Ferguson comes back from his time abroad and begins studying with him that work will really begin. Hochberg leaves and as Levine leaves he advises Ferguson to treat his time with Hochberg as valuable and unique.

Ferguson joins Michaelson and Shorty and in a few minutes by another intern, Pete. While Shorty repeatedly asks Pete whether he can borrow a formal vest for a party Pete tells Ferguson he's concerned about a patient they share whom Pete says was given a too-high dose of insulin on the instructions of another physician, Cunningham. Ferguson

tells him from then on he's to take orders from him and not Cunningham and Pete agrees. He then asks if anyone has any food and everyone makes jokes about how Pete prefers food over romance. Pete is called to attend a patient and as he leaves Ferguson asks him to drop off the jar of sputum off at the lab. Pete takes it and goes out followed by Shorty who asks again about the vest.

Gordon comes back in and talks with Ferguson about their terminal patient. They discuss treatment options and Gordon says the only thing to do is for Ferguson to supervise a transfusion that night. Ferguson tries to find another physician to do it saying he's made plans with his fiancy but Gordon says it has to be Ferguson and adds if Laura makes a fuss she can go see his wife. A nurse rushes in calling for Ferguson to come help with an emergency. Ferguson goes out telling Michaelson to call the operating room and have Hochberg paged.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Atmosphere is a key component of this play. Scenes are constantly punctuated with calls on the public address system, stage directions call for constant activity in the hallways, and there is a sense that conversations are conducted with speed, urgency, and terse clarity. There is also a great deal of authentic-sounding medical terminology and it's easy to see how *Men in White* might be described as the *ER* of its period. These elements provide the impression, not only of carefully researched realism, but also that what is going on is extremely important; reinforcing a key component of the play's central conflict that becomes more and more defined as the action unfolds.

In the middle of this hum of activity several key story elements are foreshadowed. Most important of these is the relationship between doctors and their spouses introduced in the conversation between Gordon and Hochberg and developed in the conversation between Hochberg, Levine, and Ferguson and expanded upon by what Ferguson says about Laura. Specifically, Ferguson's concerns about how Laura will react to his canceling their plans foreshadows the concerns that arise for both of them when it becomes clear just how much focus medicine is going to take in Ferguson's life. It is this relationship that is the central relationship of the play both dramatically and thematically.

Other elements of foreshadowing include the discussions of Laura's father, Levine's concerns about his wife's health and the conversation with Pete about Cunningham all of which foreshadow confrontations that develop later in the play. Most important of these secondary foreshadowing's, however, is the brief discussion between McCabe and Hochberg about young doctors. The action of the scene in which Hochberg clearly displays considerable faith in Ferguson suggests that when Hochberg spoke to McCabe about the dedication of young doctors it was Ferguson he had in mind. This plays an important role in the conflict to come putting Hochberg in direct opposition to Laura for Ferguson's attention and commitment.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

In an expensive private room Hudson issues business instructions to his assistant, Mooney and demands a cigarette. Mooney reminds him he's not supposed to smoke but Hudson insists and lights up. Hochberg comes in, takes the cigarette out of Hudson's mouth, puts it out, and throws it away. Mooney leaves and Hudson immediately goes to his phone and makes a call but then suddenly stops because of pain in his chest. Hochberg takes the phone out of his hand, hangs it up, and tells Hudson to get into bed saying that he doesn't understand why he's being so foolish.

Laura comes in and greets her father and Hochberg whom she calls "Hocky." Hochberg tells her that Hudson has been smoking again and when she becomes angry Hudson tells her he's fine and that he's being discharged soon. Laura tells him to forget the office saying that money's no good unless he can enjoy it. Hudson says he can still use the money to send her on her honeymoon. Laura says she doesn't care about a honeymoon as long as she's with Ferguson and then asks Hochberg where he is. Hochberg says he's busy working. Laura turns her attention back to Hudson asking whether he's going to behave himself. Hudson says he will then changes the subject asking about a party she was at the night before and commenting that it's too bad Ferguson couldn't make it. Laura says she spent most of the party upstairs with the hostess's new baby, makes superficial, uninformed comments about babies in general, and then picks up the phone to have Ferguson paged. Hochberg tells her firmly to forget about seeing him since he's in the operating room. Laura resentfully puts down the phone. Hudson asks her to make a call to the office, Hochberg calls him insane for working so much, and Laura says he's not the only one with Hudson adding that Ferguson is working like a slave and making no money. Hochberg talks about how doctors don't make any money during their internship years but explaining that this is the time that will determine whether Ferguson becomes an important man. Laura says he's already important to her and then asks Hudson what time she should pick him up.

Ferguson comes in teasing Laura about her hat and Hudson about being the hospital's best patient. Hudson reminds him to get his list of wedding guests to his secretary right away and then make sure his travel visa is in order. Ferguson and Laura talk about how much fun they're going to have in Vienna but Hochberg quietly says that when he was studying all he did was work and only occasionally had time to relax. A Nurse comes in to take Hudson out for a sunbath and after grumbling about having to ride in a wheelchair asks the Nurse to bring the report he was reading along with her. Hochberg tries again to get him to slow down but Hudson protests that there's no strain in reading. As he goes he urges Ferguson and Laura to enjoy themselves in Vienna saying they're only young once. Hochberg sits as if he's going to talk seriously to them but takes the playful hints aimed at him and goes out leaving the young couple alone.

Ferguson and Laura talk about how lonely they've been for each other and how unhappy Laura is about their being apart so much. She talks about wishing she'd known him when he was a child but Ferguson says that she would have found his life ordinary and gloomy. He tells a poetic story about a young boy who was blind from birth who had an operation that gave him sight and who wept with joy when he first saw the stars. He says that's how he felt when he met her.

A page comes over the loudspeaker calling for Ferguson. Laura holds him tightly saying he can't go but he gets ready to leave. Laura tells him she has to go make herself ready for the party they're going to that night anyway but Ferguson breaks it to her that he's got to stay and do the transfusion. She protests that she was really looking forward to their being together. He says they'll go out the next night but Laura says she can't spend her life like this and suggests that when they get back from Vienna he can go into private practice and set his own hours. Ferguson says that if he wants to study with Hochberg that won't be possible and Laura agrees saying that she knows "Hocky" and how hard he works his interns. She then says she can't go on like this adding that she'd rather break the relationship off then and there and try to get over him. Ferguson says she can't be serious and Laura says it would kill her but she'd rather have that kind of pain than experience the slow steady pain of constant separation for their entire married life.

The page comes over the loudspeaker again and Ferguson calls in to find out what it's about. He discovers that Dr. Cunningham is making a misdiagnosis of the insulin patient and gets ready to leave. He tries to kiss Laura but she turns away. He tries to assure her that things will sort themselves out but she says that he has to come to a decision. Ferguson goes out. Laura lingers for a moment, tearful, and then goes out as well.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The play's central conflict is developed further in this scene through the clearly defined tension between the demands of Ferguson's career and his private life. The characters of Hochberg and Laura are vividly portrayed personifications of these demands with Hochberg representing Ferguson's ambition and the practical burden of hospital work and Laura representing the potential for ongoing personal happiness. Her symbolic value is developed in another way later in the play but for now it's interesting to note how in this scene she is portrayed as selfish and shallow. As a result the play's theme begins to emerge - that compared to the life offered by Laura the work done by people like Ferguson and Hochberg is far more important and requires deep personal sacrifice. This sense of importance was suggested earlier through the urgent atmosphere of Scene 1 and is dramatized in the following scene, in which Ferguson called from his fiancy's side, saves a life.

That being said, an obvious parallel is developed in this scene between the work-obsessed Hudson and the equally work-obsessed Hochberg and Ferguson. Hudson is clearly being destroyed as a result of his drive, self-disregard, and ambition; characteristics he shares with Ferguson. The juxtaposition implies that Ferguson is

headed for the same kind of self-destruction as Hudson a point that Laura actually makes in her comments that her father's not the only one who works like someone insane. The irony is that she's making the point in order to achieve her own selfish goals, which therefore suggests that it's irrelevant. In other words, the thematic point is clearly being made again that the work doctors do is worth any sacrifice even that of their own health.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

A student nurse, Barbara calls for a page for Ferguson. Nearby, Mr. and Mrs. Smith worry about their daughter, Dorothy. Dr. Cunningham comes in. The Smiths tell her that their daughter has collapsed and he does a quick examination ignoring Barbara's attempts to give him information and telling her to take the Smiths outside. She does and when she comes back Cunningham orders an insulin injection. Barbara tells him that Ferguson ordered no more insulin and Cunningham tells her to take orders from him.

As Barbara is preparing the injection Ferguson comes in. He and Cunningham argue about whose diagnosis is correct. Cunningham tells Ferguson to leave but Ferguson grabs the hypodermic, squirts out the insulin, tells Barbara to prepare the patient, and shouts down the hall to another nurse for a syringe of glucose. Barbara says that she's already got glucose there and he shouts down the hall to bring adrenaline instead. He continues to issue orders even though Cunningham is threatening to have him brought up on disciplinary charges. Ferguson and Barbara give the patient the injection and Cunningham orders Ferguson out of the room but Ferguson remains behind. He, Barbara, and Cunningham watch the patient intently. For a moment or two there's no response but then Dorothy wakes up and weakly asks for water. Barbara brings her a drink and Ferguson holds the glass to her lips. After a sip or two, Dorothy asks for her mother and Barbara goes out to get her. Dorothy then complains of pain and Cunningham and Ferguson argue over the best way to treat it. Cunningham wins, sends Barbara out to get an injection of morphine, and says he ought to report Ferguson but under the circumstances he's prepared to let his insubordination pass.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith come in thrilled that their daughter is getting better. Cunningham tells them they can't stay long and then takes them out. When they're gone Ferguson reassures Dorothy that he'll be by her side as she drops off to sleep. Barbara comes back in with the pain treatment and Ferguson tells her to get the treatment he prescribed. When Barbara comes back she and Ferguson look down at Dorothy and Ferguson comments that she's got hair like Laura's. Barbara says she thinks it was wonderful the way he stood up to Cunningham but Ferguson speaks sharply to her and she drops the hypodermic she brought in. He softens his manner, reassures her she's going to be a good nurse, and urges her to get a good night's sleep. She says she can't since she's got a major exam in the morning. When she tells him the subject of the exam, Ferguson says he'll lend her some notes and tells her to come down to his office to collect them later.

A more senior nurse, Mary comes in just as there's another page for Ferguson. He issues orders as to how Dorothy's pain is to be treated saying that if either of the nurses has any questions they're to page him he'll be around all night. The page sounds again, Ferguson goes and Barbara watches him.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

There are three main points to this relatively brief intense scene. The first is to re-establish the atmospheric sense of urgency first defined in the opening scene. The second is to establish Ferguson's character as a doctor this scene being the first time he's actually in action. The way he's portrayed as correct, compassionate, and an independent thinker establishes him as embodying what the play suggests are the ideal characteristics of a physician. This reinforces the point suggested in the previous scene that a superficial life with Laura would be a waste with the fact that he saves a life making the point even more strongly. It's not a particularly subtle scene particularly because at the same time as Ferguson is portrayed as a white knight Cunningham is portrayed as pompous buffoon but in terms of dramatizing the play's theme it is very effective.

The third key point is to introduce the relationship with Barbara who plays a key role in the action of the second two acts of the play. Her appearance in this scene both sets a key subplot in motion and is foreshadowing of what's to come - an added level of pressure on Ferguson that makes his decisions about what to do with his life even more difficult.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

In Ferguson's office, which doubles as a bedroom, Ferguson reads a heavy medical text. Shorty comes in wearing Pete's borrowed vest but looking for a bow tie. Ferguson gives him his and tries to tie it for him but fails and suggests Shorty ask someone else. Pete comes in looking for food and Ferguson tells him there's some chocolate. Shorty goes out to his party and then as Pete eats Ferguson's entire supply of chocolate he asks why he's still there. Ferguson explains about the transfusion and Pete casually says that the patient died a few minutes ago. He then says he's going to run out to get a sandwich and asks Ferguson to watch his floor for a few minutes. Ferguson agrees and Pete goes out. Ferguson is thoughtful for a moment and then puts aside his book and places a call to Laura saying he can make to the party that night after all. They get into an argument about whether Ferguson should focus on his marriage or his studies with Laura clearly pressuring him to make a decision right away. He tells her they'll talk about it tomorrow and hangs up.

Levine comes in looking for the test results on his wife's sputum. Ferguson makes a phone call, finds out the sputum is being examined at that moment, and asks for the results to be called down to him when they're ready. He hangs up and the conversation he then has with Levine reveals that Levine chose to marry his wife instead of study with Hochberg that Levine's wealthy Jewish mother disowned him when he married a non-Jew, and that he and his wife are struggling to make ends meet. Ferguson confesses that he wonders whether college and med school were worth the grind but says it's all he ever wanted to do. He talks about how his father, a small town physician, lived by the motto "above all is humanity" and wanted nothing more than to die doing his job, which he did. He concludes by saying that next to that motto personal desires for things like marriage don't seem to amount to much. Levine talks wistfully about the government taking over medicine someday but Ferguson cynically comments that for that to happen doctors will have to stop being so acquisitive. He talks forcefully about doctors having to give up outside influences in order to do what they have to do.

An Orderly brings in the results from the sputum tests. Ferguson calls the lab to make sure the results are accurate and when he finds out they are hands Levine the report, which indicates that Levine's wife has tuberculosis. Ferguson advises the distraught Levine to try moving to a drier climate and Levine talks about having to start all over again and that he doesn't know whether it's possible. He goes out sadly. Pete comes in excited about the excellent sandwich he had and about the pretty x-ray technician he sat next to at the deli where he got the sandwich. Ferguson angrily asks him to leave and he goes out. Ferguson paces and then throws himself onto the bed.

Barbara comes in looking for the notes. Ferguson flips through his files, finds them, and insensitively tosses them in Barbara's lap. Barbara asks him if there's anything wrong and Ferguson says there's nothing. Barbara starts to go but then hurries back in after

seeing the head nurse in the hallway. Ferguson says she'd better stay in his room until the nurse is gone. As she's waiting Barbara asks whether Ferguson is upset about Cunningham. Ferguson says no and tells her to not worry about him. When she comments that he works very hard he quickly loses his temper but then just as quickly calms back down and points out some key parts of his notes. When he's through, Barbara confesses that she felt quite frightened when Dorothy was so close to death and Ferguson confesses that he feels the same way, goes on to talk about how his patient just died, and about how he's frustrated and confused. Barbara agrees with him saying she feels the same way but adding the only thing that matters is here and now and being alive. She confesses that she's very tired and very alone and before they know it they're in each other's arms and kissing. Ferguson suddenly moves away talking again about the notes and saying that he's going up to check his floor. He tells her the head nurse is gone and that Barbara can go. When he leaves Barbara gathers up the notes and is about to leave but then decides to stay. She puts the notes on the desk, sits on the bed, and waits.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

There are two parallels to Ferguson's situation in this scene, one relatively insignificant and one quite important. Shorty's preparations to go to the party are similar to Ferguson's situation but in the opposite way - Shorty is going to the party that Ferguson would have gone to if he hadn't had to wait around for the transfusion. This perhaps indicates that Shorty is a less dedicated and less talented doctor than Ferguson; again defining what an ideal physician he is by creating a contrast.

The more important parallel to Ferguson's situation can be found in that of Levine. His desperate, poverty-stricken plight is a warning to Ferguson of what might happen if he too forsakes studying with Hochberg and marries for love. The parallel is further developed by giving Levine a wealthy parent in the same way that Laura has one. Although Hudson's reaction to the marriage is likely to be different than that of Levine's mother to his there is still the possibility that not conforming to Laura's ideals of how her husband should behave will lead Ferguson to risk losing financial support in the same way as Levine did. This theory is borne out by the boardroom conversations of the first scene of the next act in which Ferguson becomes a pawn in the hospital's game to gain income from Hudson.

In the latter part of the conversation with Levine, Ferguson reveals what's at the core of his beliefs about medicine and almost seems to be talking himself into sticking to his guns when it comes to his difference of opinion with Laura. The placement of this speech is crucial coming just before the development of another obstacle to his achieving his goals, his relationship with Barbara. In other words, juxtaposition of contrasts again defines both conflict and theme. The challenge to Ferguson's professional and personal integrity that Barbara triggers materializes more fully in the play's second and third acts but for the moment they are simply companions on the front lines of the battle against disease and death; lonely, tired, frustrated, and vulnerable.

The act's final image of Barbara alone and waiting is perhaps ambiguous in that we don't really know whether she's waiting just to talk or for something more. There's nothing ambiguous about what happens to her later as a result of her decision to wait and neither is there anything ambiguous about the choices Ferguson has to make once the fallout of everything that's happened on this eventful day comes into play.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

This act begins three months after the conclusion of the previous act. In a boardroom the hospital's advisory committee discusses the current financial situation. The business managers including Houghton, Spencer, and Rummond urge the doctors to cut down on their expenses. The doctors including Gordon, Wren, and Hochberg say they can't possibly cut expenses without compromising service. When it appears that there isn't going to be any immediate agreement on that issue Spencer moves the discussion along to the recommendations from the internships committee. Houghton is dismayed to see that the son of a senator, an important donor to the hospital, isn't on the list but in spite of his protests that the senator is upset the doctors insist the son is simply not competent. When again there seems to be no compromise possible Spencer moves the discussion along.

Spencer begins by talking about how the Depression is affecting everyone. Doctors make jokes about how difficult it is to collect their fees and Spencer urges them to be serious saying that a couple of the board's important trustees are finding it difficult to make their financial commitments. He says, however, that Hudson (the real estate dealer from Act 1) is prepared to invest and suggests that the deal might be sealed if Ferguson, Hudson's future son-in-law, is offered an associate's position sooner rather than later. Hochberg immediately protests that Ferguson won't be ready speaking at length about how his potential to be a fine surgeon will be cut off if he goes into practice right away. The others try to get him to change his position with Spencer urging him to consider the hospital. Hochberg tells him in no uncertain terms that if Ferguson were to go into practice now he could make mistakes that will damage both his own career and the integrity of the hospital. Spencer and other non-doctors scoff at him and then ask Wren his opinion. Wren agrees that Ferguson won't be ready but adds that an older doctor could always supervise him. Hochberg scoffs at that saying that would make Ferguson a figurehead and nothing more. Gordon adds that he can't approve of the appointment but because the hospital needs Hudson's support an exception could be made. Hochberg protests again but Gordon urges him to face facts saying that other hospitals are closing down beds and entire wings.

Hochberg acknowledges the importance of contributions of men like Hudson suggesting that it's a crime that hospitals should be dependant upon the generosity of a few individuals. He then suggests that the board offer Ferguson a guarantee of a job when he's ready but when he says that will be in five or six years the non-doctors become outraged. Spencer says by that point it will be too late saying that Hudson is already urging Ferguson to go into practice on his own. After debating whether the medical board will approve the appointment and whether the advisory committee can approach Hudson for particular help with the x-ray wing Spencer adjourns the meeting. Hochberg tells him to not be too sure Ferguson will accept the appointment saying he knows the kind of doctor Ferguson wants to become. Spencer tells him that he spoke with

Ferguson at a party the night before and that he loves the idea. Hochberg reacts with shock as the other men leave.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Atmosphere of another sort plays a key role in this scene; the back-room political atmosphere of hospital administration. The tricky balance of financial interests vs. the interests of doctors in providing quality care are the focus of the conflict suggesting that it doesn't matter how committed the doctors are, money and prestige are the bottom line. This point is illustrated not only through the debate about Ferguson and Hudson but also in the brief exchange about the senator's son. It's interesting to note that the doctors win that argument but at no point in that conversation is money discussed. The implication is that what's important is the senator's approval, which is evidently of less value to the non-doctors on the committee than Hudson's money for which they fight passionately. It's a fight they eventually win much to Hochberg's dismay.

The reference to the Depression refers to the time at which the play is set, the 1930's. After a crash in the stock market in 1929, the American economy went into a profound slump, which combined with a drought in the mid-west to put hundreds of thousands of people out of work. This aspect of the play's context illuminates not only the situation of the hospital but also the individual situation of Levine who is clearly one of the people caught in the despair caused by the Depression's effects.

Hochberg's comment about the hospital's dependence upon the generosity of individuals echoes the comment made by Levine in Act 1 Scene 4 in which he hoped the government would one day take over the administration of medical care. Both these comments also relate to a later comment made by Hochberg in response to the desperate situation in which Barbara finds herself, which suggests that one of the play's secondary themes is that hospitals could be more a state institution than privately funded and administered more along the lines of the contemporary Canadian system of socialized universal health care. This, of course, hasn't happened - not in America. As the scene comes to a close and we learn of Ferguson's approval of the idea of going into practice the question is raised as to what's happened to him since the end of the previous act to make him change his mind about going into practice on his own. The answers to that question are revealed as the action of the second act develops.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

This scene is set in the library, the same setting as Act 1 Scene 1. Elderly Dr. McCabe tries to read as Shorty, Michaelson, and Pete make jokes about golf and difficult patients. As McCabe tells them to be quiet, Cunningham comes in looking for Ferguson to perform a procedure. Michaelson explains that Ferguson is attending the rehearsal for his wedding next week. Cunningham goes out complaining about having to perform the procedure himself. McCabe tosses Shorty a pamphlet saying he should be studying instead of worrying about his golf swing. He then checks the windows to make sure they're closed saying there's a draft.

Ferguson and Laura appear. Ferguson comes right into the library but Laura hesitates wondering whether it's appropriate for her to be there. Ferguson brings her in and asks whether there were any calls for him. Michaelson says there were several and the other interns make jokes about how they're never going to get married. An annoyed McCabe then goes out, which makes Laura worry that she shouldn't have come in. The interns urge her to not worry saying that he's got nothing else to do but study and be grumpy. Ferguson adds that medicine is McCabe's life saying that if he lives to be eighty that's the way he wants to be. Laura says she wants to enjoy life to the last and at the first sign of it becoming not enjoyable she can lie down and die happy. Pete reassures her that chances are none of the doctors will live to be very old saying that most die young.

As Laura reacts unhappily to that piece of news Michaelson tells Ferguson that Cunningham has been looking for him. As Ferguson goes to the phones and tries to track Cunningham down he talks about how in four days he'll be free of him for good adding that all he's thinking about now is Vienna. The interns invite Laura and Ferguson to join them for lunch but she explains that they went out to eat after the rehearsal. The interns go out and Laura takes out a cigarette waiting for Ferguson to light it for her. As he does they talk about how happy Ferguson is and Laura says it's a relief after he seemed so unhappy after talking to Spencer the night before. She reassures him that he's sure to get the job and Ferguson hopes that nobody's talked to Hochberg yet saying that he wanted to talk to him first. Laura warns him that if he changes his mind and decides to study with Hochberg after all she'll drop out of their life together. They discuss how it will be easy for Hochberg to find someone else to study with him with Ferguson commenting that he's an important man. Laura says the really important man is the man who knows how to live saying that Hochberg and her father are alike, flat, and colorless with no outside interests. She pleads with Ferguson to not be like them saying that she wants their lives to be "full and beautiful." Ferguson says he wants the same thing adding that once he thought he could manage to live without her. Laura asks when that was but Ferguson says never and kisses her.

A nurse comes in followed by Mrs. D'Andrea an Italian mother who asks in broken English for reassurance about her son. Ferguson tells her they won't know until

tomorrow what her son's condition will be. As Mrs. D'Andrea prays in Italian the nurse takes her out. Hochberg passes them on his way in wondering where Ferguson has been saying he had promised to be away for only half an hour but was in fact gone for two. Laura says what they were doing was awfully important and Ferguson says it won't happen again. Hochberg says he hopes not but then asks whether it's true that Ferguson is considering the job offered by the board. Ferguson says that after a year studying abroad he'll be ready for it. As Hochberg shakes his head Laura argues that Ferguson has worked hard already and Ferguson says that he wants more out of life than just work. Hochberg assumes that this means Ferguson won't be studying with him when he gets back but then says Ferguson has every right to live his life the way he wants to.

Hochberg changes the subject asking how Hudson is doing. After Laura tells him he tells Ferguson to be ready to go into surgery with him explaining that Barbara has to have an operation after being stricken with a serious infection as the result of a messed up abortion. Ferguson stands deep in thought as Michaelson comes in and says something is wrong with Mrs. D'Andrea's son's jaw. It turns out that Ferguson was supposed to give him a shot but Laura was in such a hurry to leave that he forgot to tell another doctor to do it for him. Hochberg says that such behavior is inexcusable and when Laura says he left to attend their "terribly important" wedding rehearsal Hochberg angrily tells her how serious the D'Angelo boy's condition is and orders Ferguson to go up and give him his injection at once. As Ferguson goes out Hochberg realizes that Laura needs to see first hand how important Ferguson's work is, arranges for her to watch the surgery he's about to perform, and angrily goes out.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

The key element of this scene is the intensely negative portrayal of distractions that pull physicians away from what is clearly being defined as a near-sacred calling; a depiction dramatized by everything from McCabe's anger at Shorty's focus on golf to the draft McCabe says he feels a symbol of those same distractions. Most damaging, however, is the character of Laura, who is unambiguously presented as a negative influence on Ferguson. This scene marks the beginning of her deepening symbolic value an aspect of her character that reaches its highest level of condemnation later in this act when she literally becomes an infection; a disease to be scrubbed away. For now though she merely appears selfish, demanding, and petulant particularly when juxtaposed with Mrs. D'Andrea whose needs and concerns appear so much more important. More than ever it's clear that this play doesn't just have a theme it has an agenda; a commitment to showing how transcendently important the vocation of the physician is.

This agenda relates to the answer to the earlier posed question about why Ferguson is considering the possibility of going into private practice becomes clear in this scene - he's submitted to Laura's insistence that he marry her on her terms. The shallowness of his decision, which by contrast increases the importance of the work he does is illustrated by his neglect of Mrs. D'Andrea's son and will be defined further by the action of the rest of this act particularly the situation with Barbara. Meanwhile, the mention of

her abortion both foreshadows and increases the secondary pressure first put on Ferguson at the end of Act 1. This pressure increases throughout the remainder of the play climaxing with Barbara's death in Act 3.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

In the corridor outside Barbara's hospital room Ferguson discusses her condition with Mary the senior nurse seen earlier. Mary tells him that before she lapsed into unconsciousness Barbara asked for him. As he's about to go into the room Mary says Hochberg is in there and if he goes in Barbara might start talking again. This clearly means that Mary knows that Barbara had an abortion and that Ferguson was the father of her baby. Ferguson asks why this is happening to him and why Barbara couldn't just keep away from him. Mary says she saw how Barbara felt about him and tried to keep her away but Barbara wouldn't listen. Ferguson says she should have told him what was happening and then asks why Mary didn't tell him either. Mary says she didn't know until Barbara came in the previous night. Ferguson says if he'd known he would have never let this happen.

Hochberg sticks his head out of Barbara's room looking for the injection he ordered. As Mary finishes preparing it Hochberg asks Ferguson if he took care of the D'Andrea boy and Ferguson says he did. Hochberg then tells Mary she'd better start notifying Barbara's family and friends and Mary says she has none. He goes back into the room. Ferguson becomes upset that Barbara has no one to turn to and Mary says that she's even been fired from her job adding that it'd almost be better if she didn't wake up.

Hochberg and Wren come out of Barbara's room commenting on how unfortunate it is that she had to go to a "butcher" to solve her situation. Hochberg says that some laws are from the Dark Ages and asks rhetorically why the poor and ignorant can't be helped. He then explains to Ferguson that the only possibility Barbara has for recovery is a complete hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) and explains his reasoning. Ferguson says it's a shame to deprive her of the chance of having children when she loved them so much but Hochberg says there's no choice. He asks Mary whether the man who made Barbara pregnant knows what's going on and Mary says she doesn't know. Hochberg tells Ferguson to make arrangements for the operating room. Ferguson calls and reports the OR is ready. Hochberg tells Mary to give Barbara the injection he ordered and tells Ferguson to have her brought up right away. Wren offers to give the anesthetic. Hochberg thanks him, and then tells Ferguson to go up to the operating room and start scrubbing. As Mary comes out after giving Barbara her injection an orderly arrives with a stretcher. He jokingly calls Mary sweetheart but then reacts with puzzlement as Mary bursts into tears. The orderly goes into Barbara's room and Ferguson takes the elevator up to the operating room.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

At the time the play was written in the 1930's abortion was an illegal and even criminal procedure. Barbara's infection and death were common consequences of this lack of

legal options for women while Hochberg's comments about how care should be offered to the poor and ignorant and how women were "butchered" represent the movement towards reproductive rights for women that, at that time, was just beginning to intensify. This aspect of the story combines with the earlier discussed comments about socialized medicine to suggest that a secondary theme of the play is the idea of medical care reform.

This socially conscious aspect of the play aside, the key element of this scene is the revelation of what happened between Barbara and Ferguson after the end of Act 1. The inference is that when Ferguson came back from seeing his patient he and Barbara had sex, Barbara got pregnant, and later attempted an abortion. Of particular interest in this scene is the character of Mary who seems to know and understand everything and have real compassion for everyone involved including both Barbara and Ferguson. This is indicated by her care for Barbara, her telling Hochberg that she doesn't know who the father is, when she clearly knows it's Ferguson, and her over-emotional reaction to being called sweetheart. This portrayal of genuine empathy is contrasted by Ferguson's conscience-stricken but nonetheless sexist and "blame-the-victim" comments about why Barbara didn't keep away from him. This male-centric perspective on such situations is very much a product of the time in which the play was written although it must be said in some quarter's men in similar circumstances would have the same opinions even today.

Finally, this scene finishes laying the groundwork for the scene in the operating room, which contains the dramatic climax of the act and the thematic climax of the play. The first part of the groundwork was laid in the previous scene in which Hochberg ordered that Laura be allowed into the operating room to observe meaning that Ferguson will be in the same room with both the women with whom he's been involved. Our awareness of this increases our level of anticipation as the scene changes.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

The first part of this scene is essentially a demonstration of medical procedure as doctors including Wren and Pete and nurses prepare for surgery - scrubbing their hands, putting on sterile gowns, preparing instruments, etc. A nurse shows in Laura who wears a surgical gown that she says is wrinkled. The nurse says that ironing the gowns would de-sterilize them and goes about her business. Hochberg and Ferguson come in already gowned and go to the sinks to scrub. Ferguson is surprised to see Laura there. As she goes towards him Hochberg orders her to stay in the corner out of the way since she's not sterile. He tells a nurse to find Laura a mask and a stool near the operating table from which she can see everything that goes on. He goes into the operating room.

As Ferguson finishes scrubbing Wren appears and calls for the orderly to bring Barbara in. When she arrives both Wren and Ferguson look her over. Ferguson tries to reassure her but she pleads with him to not let them hurt her and to be there with her. When he says he will she says she loved him and falls unconscious. Laura and Ferguson look at each other as Barbara is wheeled out. Laura asks what Barbara meant Ferguson says he's sorry and Laura grabs his arm. Ferguson suddenly backs away from her and rips away his gown and gloves shouting that Laura has made him unsterile. Laura stares at him as a nurse makes him sterile again. When the nurse is gone Laura asks whether Ferguson had an affair with Barbara. Ferguson says he did but Hochberg calls him and he goes over to the operating table. Laura begins to cry and runs out. Two nurses look at each other and comment on how she must be a med-student and has a long way to go. The doctors begin surgery.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

Confrontations between Ferguson and the various aspects of his life reach a climactic pitch in this scene dramatizing the way he's caught between his fiancy and his lover, his fiancy's demands and the demands of his profession, and his desires as a human being and his desires as a physician. In the play's thematic climax the thematic point that outside influences interfere with the physician's calling is embodied in the confrontation between Ferguson and Laura specifically in the moment she grabs his arm. This incident juxtaposed with Ferguson's reaction makes the vivid symbolic statement that Laura and everything she represents is herself an infection; a threatening influence endangering Ferguson's commitment to a higher calling.

The threat represented by Laura is, ironically enough, repeated in Barbara's words just prior to being operated on. When she tells Ferguson she loves him and asks him to be with her she is placing the same kind of demands on him as Laura, demands that increase in Act 3 and put Ferguson in exactly the same position - marry and lose hope

of being the best doctor he can be. In other words love, in any form, only gets in the way.

Act 3

Act 3 Summary

This scene is set in Ferguson's room, the same setting as the final scene in Act 1 in which Ferguson and Barbara first kissed. Ferguson sits alone in the dark and doesn't respond when there's a knock on the door. Hochberg comes in and bids George good morning opening the curtains to reveal a bright beautiful day. Their conversation reveals that that Barbara's temperature is better, that Ferguson stayed with her all night, and that the D'Andrea boy is doing much better. Ferguson tells Hochberg there's something he has to tell him and when Hochberg says he already knows Ferguson suggests he must think pretty badly of him adding that he wouldn't have let Barbara do what he did if he'd known about her condition. Hochberg tries to reassure him saying that Barbara did what she did of her own free will but Ferguson pays no attention talking about how bad life is going to be for her and saying that he's going to do the right thing and marry her if she'll have him. Hochberg asks what about Laura and Ferguson says she's through with him explaining that he's been repeatedly calling her but she won't talk to him. Hochberg sympathizes but then suggests it's not the worst thing that could have happened. When Ferguson reacts with disbelief Hochberg reminds him that now that he's free of Laura he can focus on his work. Ferguson reminds him he's going to marry Barbara but Hochberg says marriage won't do either of them any good and reminds Ferguson about Levine whom Hochberg says has written a letter begging for twenty dollars to buy food. When Ferguson says he's nothing about Levine, Hochberg tells him that Levine loved his wife where Ferguson plans to marry Barbara only because he should. As they argue further the phone rings and Hochberg answers it. When he's finished his conversation he tells Ferguson that Laura is coming up. Ferguson thanks him for everything he's done for him but then talks about how much he loves Laura and how she brought life back into his life after so many years of studying and work. He says he's realized that what he really wants is to keep studying but can't because of Barbara. Hochberg tells him again to reconsider.

Laura appears, ignores Ferguson's greeting, and gives her attention solely to Hochberg. She says she wanted to explain to him why she disappeared from the operating room so quickly but Hochberg says he understands. Laura takes out a cigarette and Ferguson automatically prepares to light it as he did before but Laura deliberately turns to Hochberg and asks him to light it saying there's no excuse for what Ferguson did. Hochberg suggests that every human being occasionally has impulses that make them do foolish things but Laura refuses to accept it. Ferguson starts to go out saying Laura's absolutely right. Laura says he doesn't have to go because of her saying that she's got to go home and pack for her trip but then adding what really hurts is that Ferguson didn't have time for her but did for Barbara. Hochberg is paged but before he goes he tells Laura that Ferguson is planning to marry Barbara and throw away everything he's ever worked for. Ferguson starts to go with him but Hochberg tells him to stay and goes out.

Laura starts to go as well but Ferguson asks her to stay saying he still loves her. Laura asks him to explain how it was possible for him to do what he did. He says he'd had a hard day at the end of which Barbara came to him and was sympathetic. Laura says that not coming to her instead of Barbara meant he didn't care for her but when Ferguson explains that it was the night that they fought about his future she understands a little more but still can't believe it when he says he loves her. He says if he hadn't loved her after their fight he'd have ended the relationship and gone to Vienna alone. Laura says that he should go anyway but then mocks him for making a "beautiful gesture" calling him a coward for taking the easy way out and marrying Barbara. He responds by saying he was a coward for letting himself being talked out of working with Hochberg by her and adds that he's planning to marry Barbara not because he's a coward but because her life is ruined and he's responsible. Laura starts to cry realizing that she's been selfish about wanting Ferguson for herself and saying she still loves him.

Hochberg comes in with the news that Barbara has died. Ferguson reacts with despair but Laura and Hochberg both tell him to stop torturing himself. After Hochberg tells him all the things he did to try to save Barbara's life Ferguson asks what's the point of going on when in the end all doctors are helpless. Hochberg says doctors ask themselves that all the time but adds that advances in medicine are making it easier and easier to save more lives and that in twenty years even more lives will be saved. He says it's not easy for any doctor but in the end there's a kind of glory in their work and deep down they all know it. He goes to the door, gives Ferguson the surgical schedule for the day, and leaves.

Laura suggests that she and Ferguson go away together and talk but Ferguson tells her the hospital is where he belongs. Laura sees that, that's true and then says when he gets back from Vienna he should call her and perhaps they can talk. The loudspeaker squawks out a page for Ferguson. Laura tells him to work hard and he goes out. Ferguson picks up the phone and answers his call, which is from Mrs. D'Andrea. He reassures her that her son is all right and brushes tears from his eyes as he tells her he's going to live and not to cry.

Act 3 Analysis

All the elements of this scene combine to reinforce the dramatic point that Ferguson's true calling is medicine and the thematic point that the calling is more important than anything else. These elements include everything from the way that Hochberg lets morning sunlight into the room, which symbolically represents both the dawning of the truth in Ferguson's life and a new beginning through Barbara's death, which frees him from his noble but misguided determination to marry her to Laura's realization that his first and best love is his work. Other important elements making the point include Hochberg's speech about the hope inherent in the act of being a physician clearly meant to inspire us as much as it inspires Ferguson and Laura and the play's final moments dramatizing Hochberg's point that the rewards for getting the job right are more than enough compensation for getting it wrong.

A jarring element of this scene is Laura's sudden acceptance of the nature of Ferguson's calling and her confession of love. Given what's been seen of her character up to this point it doesn't seem entirely credible that her perspective would change so completely, so suddenly. Her comments on Ferguson's cowardice are more easily understandable given that she probably thinks he's a coward for not whole-heartedly embracing the life together she originally proposed. Ultimately, Laura's transformation is more necessary than believable given that this play is as much a didactic statement of opinion or driven by its agenda to sanctify the physician's calling as it is dramatic story telling. In other words, because the play so clearly sets out to forcefully make a particular point, that point must be made at all costs; hammered home in the most obvious ways possible even if it means that dramatic believability is to a degree sacrificed.

This is not to suggest for a moment that the play's thematic point is irrelevant or trivial in any way. On the contrary, the issues of abortion, healthcare funding, and the relationship between the physician and society are in many ways more relevant than ever in spite of their somewhat dated treatment in this still important play.

Characters

Dr. Cunningham

Although he enjoys a roster of wealthy clients, Cunningham is a lazy, careless, and incompetent practitioner. His colleagues disparage him, but because of his influential friends, he still is granted hospital privileges for his patients. Ferguson draws his disfavor when he disagrees with Cunningham's treatment of a patient, even though Ferguson's actions save the patient's life.

Barbara Dennin

Barbara is a lonely student nurse at the hospital. She is infatuated with Ferguson and initiates a sexual encounter with him. When she becomes pregnant, instead of turning to anyone at the hospital for help, she goes to an illegal abortionist who botches the job. She is brought into the hospital with an infection. The news of her indiscretion means that her life is in ruins—she will be cast out of the nursing program, and no other hospital will take her. Ferguson vows to marry her, but, although she initially seems to be recovering, she dies.

Dr. George Ferguson

Ferguson Ferguson is a promising young intern who struggles with conflict between his personal and professional lives. He is dedicated to his work and his patients, and hopes to better the lives of humanity through medical care and the development of new medical treatments. As the play opens, Ferguson is set to marry Laura—whom he deeply loves—and go with her to Vienna, where he intends to study surgery for a year. He then plans to return home to study under Hochberg at the local hospital. He wants this future despite the fact that his father, also a doctor, died at a young age of a heart attack brought on by overwork.

As the demands of his profession are so great, Laura forces him to choose between marrying her and going into private practice or continuing his studies and becoming a surgeon. Threatened with the demise of the engagement, Ferguson decides to give up his plans to become a surgeon. He decides to accept the hospital's offer of an associateship and agrees to go into private practice, though he realizes he may never fulfill his full potential as a doctor if he goes this route.

Free to pursue his medical career after Laura learns about his affair with Barbara, Ferguson again questions the importance of his medical career when he determines to marry Barbara. As before, this decision would end his dreams of becoming a surgeon. Ferguson is ready to give up medicine entirely to support Barbara. At the end of the play, however, with Barbara's death, he chooses a professional life over a personal life.

Although Laura wants to reconcile, he rededicates himself to medicine, telling her, "This is where I belong!"

Dr. Hochberg

Hochberg is the well-respected chief of surgery. His dedication to his profession is boundless; he appears to have no life outside of the hospital. Hochberg believes that achieving potential in the medical field requires absolute sacrifice and that a doctor's reward "is something richer than simply living." As Ferguson's mentor, he urges the younger doctor to stay focused on his medical career. His call that Ferguson place his studies above all other demands, even those of honor or love, shows that Hochberg has little comprehension of such demands. At the end of the play, Ferguson chooses Hochberg and the ideals he represents over all others.

Hocky

See Dr. Hochberg

Laura Hudson

Laura, Ferguson's fiancée, is the daughter of a wealthy businessman. She wants Ferguson to give up his dreams of being a surgeon and go into a lessdemanding private practice. When Ferguson says he will not do so, she threatens to break off their engagement. By the end of the play, however, she realizes how important medicine is to Ferguson. Although she wants to work out a compromise, Ferguson has decided not to let marriage sidetrack his medical aspirations.

Mr. Hudson

Hudson is a wealthy businessman, one of the few who continues to prosper during the Great Depression. A patient of Dr. Hochberg's, he declares his intention of becoming a trustee of the hospital in return for awarding his future son-inlaw, Ferguson, an associateship.

Dr. Levine

Levine is a former intern of the hospital. Six years ago, he abandoned his opportunities to work with Hochberg in order to marry. Forced into private practice to support his wife, for the past six years he has barely eked out a living. His experiences have left him an unhappy, beaten man. By the end of the play, he and his wife, who is stricken with tuberculosis, have relocated, and once again Levine faces the formidable challenge of earning a living through private practice.

Dorothy Smith

Dot is a young diabetic patient of Cunningham's. She has gone into shock as a result of Cunningham having ordered a too-large injection of insulin, but Cunningham thinks she is in a coma. Ferguson's correct diagnosis and treatment saves her life.

Themes

Professional versus Private Life

Professional versus Private Life At the center of Ferguson's dilemma is whether his professional or private life will take priority. Ferguson has spent his whole life dreaming of being a doctor. He wants this future despite the fact that his father, also a doctor, died at a young age of a heart attack brought on by overwork. The demands of the medical profession are made clear in the play. Hochberg points out that being a doctor is not about making money, but about working hard to save lives.

Laura presents a conflict for Ferguson. She is unsupportive of his professional work because it demands his almost complete concentration. She begs him to make time for their life together. She does not want him to be a man like her father and Hochberg, who have no interests outside of their careers.

Because Ferguson loves Laura so much and cannot imagine his life without her, he convinces himself that he can balance his career and his relationship. As a means of accomplishing this new goal, he prepares to accept the associateship and enter private practice. With this decision, he is attempting to mold a future in which he can be both a doctor and a husband. The play ends, however, with Ferguson realizing how much medicine has yet to accomplish and preparing to give up any semblance of a personal life. He dedicates himself completely to his professional life and to the medical field.

Ethics

The play raises the ethical questions as it demonstrates the favoritism that exists even in as noble a profession as medicine. Ferguson is offered an associateship solely because of his relationship to Hudson, whom the medical board committee is courting to become a trustee. The members of the board openly admit to trading this position for Hudson's money, which they so desperately need. While Ferguson is a very promising intern, he is not prepared for the job, nor does he have the training to go into practice. The board further acknowledges that, even without the proper training, Ferguson will do well in private practice, because of the Hudson connection.

In a contrasting situation, however, the board refuses to award an internship to a medical student who is the nephew of a senator. The student has finished 297th out of 300 candidates who took the medical boards. Despite this abysmal performance, several of the doctors support his candidacy because of his family connections and background.

Duty and Rsponsibility

Ferguson is a man who wants to fulfill his duties and responsibilities to others. He believes that as a man of medicine his greatest duty lies with his patients. Although he loves his fiancée, she must take second place to people he does not even know. Ferguson briefly denies this sense of duty when he opts to accept the associateship and rejects further studies. At the end of the play, Ferguson reaffirms that a doctor's greatest responsibility is to humanity and to learning more about medical care.

Barbara is the only person toward whom Ferguson feels a strong sense of personal responsibility. When she faces disgrace and the loss of her job and reputation after the abortion, he determines to marry her. He does not love her but feels he has no choice but to do the honorable thing because he holds himself responsible for her predicament.

Law and Abortion

The denouement of the play comes after Barbara dies as the result of an infection brought on by a botched abortion. This incident points to a theme that is essential to the play, even if it is not emphasized: that the law sometimes does not reflect what is best for the people it protects. At the time the play was written, abortion was illegal, yet many women underwent them. The individual members of the medical community in the hospital do not support the criminalization of abortion. Hochberg refers to whomever performed the abortion on Barbara as a butcher and tells a colleague that it is a "shame" that "some our laws belong to the Dark Ages!" A footnote to the 1933 edition of the play further discusses views on abortion. It notes that a doctor and former president of the American Medical Association estimated that there were more illegal abortions performed in New York and Chicago than there were children born in those cities. The footnote advocates that the United States should follow a program of fostering birth control education (birth control was also illegal at the time) as well as run legal abortion clinics.

Style

Realistic Setting

Men in White takes place in a New York City hospital in the early 1930s. The hospital is typical of those found in large cities. The play presents this setting, and the characters who inhabit it, in an utterly realistic fashion. All of the details reflect the state of the medical profession in the early 1930s, from the medical techniques to the instruments and the treatments. For instance, in the 1930s, insulin was just beginning to be used on diabetics and blood transfusions were starting to be performed. The characters also make many references to issues surrounding the medical community, mentioning actual doctors and surgeons, medical school education, and even illegal abortions. The committee members talk in blunt terms about the perilous financial situation that hospitals face because of the Great Depression. The doctors discuss their concern over the government's involvement in medical institutions, which caused many doctors of the period a great deal of worry. For its original 1933 production, the script of *Men in White* contained numerous footnotes to clarify many of the points and references raised throughout the drama, as well as the medical terminology.

Conflict

There are many conflicts with which Ferguson must deal. He confronts an older doctor, loses a patient, fights with Laura, and has an affair with a student-nurse. The most important conflict, however, is the conflict that takes place within him as he decides which is more important to him: a satisfying personal life or a challenging professional life. As Ferguson—and everyone around him, from Laura to Hochberg—sees it, he is unable to fulfill both his professional and personal needs. Ferguson is pulled in two directions as Laura threatens to break their engagement with him if he continues his studies with Hochberg, and Hochberg continuously reminds him of the noble work for which the doctor sacrifices his personal life. Ferguson's resolution of these conflicts comes three months after the dilemma first presents itself and after many dramatic events take place.

Historical Context

The Great Depression

By 1933, the United States had been suffering under the effects of the Great Depression—the worst depression in American history-for four years. During the Depression, with the loss of work and the lowering of wages, millions of Americans sank into poverty. Under the New Deal initiated by President Franklin Roosevelt, social welfare programs, including those that helped pay for health care for Americans, came under the federal government's auspices.

The Field of Medicine

In the 1930s, the United States faced a serious problem in medical care in that many Americans could not afford it. Many people responded to this financial situation by curtailing visits to physicians and hospitals. At the same time, those people forced to seek medical help often could not pay their bills. As a result, the income generated by physicians and hospitals dropped. Hospitals further suffered as charitable contributions fell. Private insurance, such as the Blue Cross plan for hospital costs, created in 1933, helped cover some costs for those Americans who could afford to purchase it.

In the 1930s, there were three types of hospitals—voluntary, public, and university. Voluntary hospitals (privately owned but nonprofit) attracted paying patients and added amenities such as private rooms and quality food and nursing care. In order to stay solvent, they reduced the amount of charity care they provided, and to attract more paying patients, they opened their facilities to private physicians; many extended surgical privileges to surgeons who were not properly qualified. Public hospitals began to conduct more medical school and specialty training and to establish affiliations with medical schools. While these developments helped improve the quality of care, hospitals continued to suffer from inadequate facilities and funding. The university hospital of medical schools also emerged at this time. These institutions accepted many charity patients, but focused on teaching and research or patients with special problems.

Medical school education and curriculum also became more standardized. Higher admission standards improved the quality of medical students. All medical school graduates were required to complete internships, a period of one to two years of unpaid postgraduate training. Most hospitals, however, did not have enough staff or facilities to train the interns. The residency system, consisting of a period of post-internship training in a specialty, also developed.

New Developments in Medicine

Many important discoveries in drug therapy took place in the 1930s, such as insulin injections for diabetics and cures for bacterial infections. Surgery also saw many significant improvements. American doctor Karl Landsteiner identified blood groups. This discovery allowed blood transfusions to take place and thus more complicated surgeries began to be performed. Surgeons also made use of intravenous replenishment of salts, fluids, and nourishment, as well as X-rays. While these innovations led to beneficial surgical operations, useless and even harmful surgeries were also performed.

Abortion and Birth Control Reform

In 1930, the drive to reform abortion and birth controls laws was beginning to gather momentum. At that time, abortion was illegal throughout the country, and women who sought them were undertaking a significant health risk. The Depression years saw a big surge in the abortion rate. Some doctors and clinics performed abortions, and "birthcontrol clubs" formed, wherein members could draw from the club's fees to pay for an abortion as needed. Despite reform efforts, abortion remained illegal for decades.

Prior to 1930, existing obscenity laws outlawed anyone from circulating birth control information. People who merely possessed contraceptive articles could be fined or imprisoned. Margaret Sanger was a leading pioneer in the birth control movement. Despite the laws forbidding the prescription of contraceptive devices, she opened several birthcontrol clinics in New York. She also organized American and international birth control conferences in the 1920s. In 1930 the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control endorsed lifting such restrictions, and in 1936 the courts said birth control did not violate obscenity laws. Within a few months, the American Medical Association approved birth control as part of medical practice and education. All but three states struck down the laws against birth control (these states lifted their laws in 1938).

Critical Overview

Men in White opened to rave reviews in 1933. In The Nation, Joseph Wood Krutch called it an "extraordinary production of an extraordinary play." This "genuine work of art," Krutch lauded, "furnishes an experience which is thrilling and absorbing." *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson wrote two glowing reviews of what he called "a good, brave play" within one week's timespan. He found that the play was "warm with life and high in aspiration." Arthur Pollock wrote in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* that the play "shines continuously with a steady intelligence." Most of these reviewers' contemporaries agreed; ten of twelve critics named *Men in White* as one of the best plays of the year, and it went on to win the Pulitzer Prize.

John Mason Brown was the primary voice of dissent, asserting in the *New York Evening Post* that the play was "piffling" and "mildewed in its hokum." While the play's advocates were not immune to its weaknesses—for instance, Atkinson questioned the play's "slavish fondness for medical terms" and Krutch admitted that "it can hardly be said that there is anything completely new in [its] theme"—the vast majority of audiences responded favorably to the compelling social issues, human drama, and triumph of the dedicated medical profession.

Men in White quickly moved beyond New York, touring the United States and on to productions in London, Vienna, and Budapest, all to equally receptive audiences. The American medical community was particularly receptive to the play, which was reviewed in medical journals and bulletins. The *Medical Record* even recommended it for "wives and fiancées of physicians and those who depend or expect to depend on a physician's income . . . [and] every medical man, for it gives to the public a clearer idea of the ideals and the problems of our profession."

The later years, however, were not as kind to *Men in White.* In a retrospective of Kingsley's career in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Paul Bailey acknowledges that the "play is dated"; Kingsley's dramatic techniques, which are "frozen in the 1930s," have "not aged well." Despite this weakness, however, Bailey asserts that because "it is imbued with a sense of optimism in the future and in progress, and as a reflection of attitudes in the 1930s it remains historically significant." Other contemporary critics and scholars have pointed out that the social issues raised by Kingsley remain relevant, even more than six decades later. As Couch writes in her introduction to *Sidney Kingsley, Five Prizewinning Plays,* "And in this time in which some form of all the humans rights issues and social problems dealt with in these plays are still, or again, with us, Sidney Kingsley has proven to be a playwright whose work is timely as well as timeless."

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, she explores how Kingsley uses characterization to explore different types of physicians.

Men in White was a critical and commercial success when it was first produced on the New York stage in 1933. Although it raises compelling social issues that are still of concern today, such as abortion and the conflict between personal and professional life, Kingsley's work generally has resonated much less loudly in the decades following his initial success. Paul Bailey notes in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* "Many contemporary critics of drama and theatre . . . tend to dismiss him with a brief mention of his work and an acknowledgment that his plays are either dated or insignificant." The main reason for this dismissal is Kingsley's dramatic style, which often strikes modern audiences as unrealistic, stilted, and underdeveloped. Writes Couch in her introduction to *Sidney Kingsley,* Five Prizewinning Plays this style "dates his work more than do the issues he confronts in that writing."

A prime example of the shortcomings of Kingsley's writing, from a contemporary point of view, is seen in the characters who populate the hospital in *Men in White.* Medical personnel and patients alike fail to truly emerge as flesh-and-blood people. However, this stylistic technique for creating characters serves a more important purpose than presenting "round" characters: It illuminates Kingsley's message—that being a good doctor requires absolute dedication, and if necessary, selfsacri fice. Kingsley creates three doctors associated with the hospital, whom Bailey finds to be "drawn in bold and clear strokes," to demonstrate the options that Ferguson has before him as he is forced to choose between the demands of his fiancée, his mentor, and himself. These doctors —Cunningham, a successful but incompetent society doctor; Levine, a beaten-down doctor scraping by in private practice; and Hochberg, the well-respected, capable chief of surgical staff—all provide examples of whom Ferguson might become in the future.

As a young, talented intern with a bright but busy future ahead of him, Ferguson is at a crossroads in his life and career. He plans on becoming a surgeon but this path requires significant sacrifices. He is willing to make these sacrifices but his willful, spoiled fiancée, Laura, rejects all notion of them. Tired of Ferguson's unavailability and foreseeing this as the pattern of their life together, Laura tells him that she only will put up with his schedule for another year; after they return from Vienna she wants him to discontinue his studies in order to "arrange our lives like human beings." Her solution is for Ferguson to "open up an office and have regular hours . . . specialize!" Through the character of Cunningham, however, Kingsley makes it clear what kind of doctor—and man—Ferguson would become were he to choose this path.

With his flourishing Park Avenue practice, "impressive equipment," and wealthy patients, Cunningham would seem the picture of a successful doctor. However, Cunningham is all image, and his success merely the result of his "political influence," which has also helped him secure the privilege of using the hospital facilities although

"his colleagues look down on him with scorn." In truth, Cunningham is a dangerous, incompetent quack. Having no interest in "keeping up with the medical journals and the march of treatment," and believing that "nine patients out of ten will be cured by nature anyway, and the tenth will die no matter what the physician does for him," he lacks the dedication that people expect from physicians. He is so unfamiliar with current medicine that, were it not for Ferguson's intervention, he would have killed his young patient, Dot, whom he had misdiagnosed and sent into shock with an overdose of insulin.

Kingsley makes it clear that if Ferguson accepts the hospital's offer of an associateship, he will end up like Cunningham, a doctor for whom he feels nothing but distaste. At the meeting of trustees, it is roundly acknowledged that if Ferguson goes into private practice, "[W]ith his wife's connections, he ought to . . . er . . . do very nicely." But according to Hochberg, Ferguson "doesn't know enough, yet; he's apt to make mistakes"; Ferguson is neither ready for an associateship nor private practice, but at Laura's behest, he is willing to "sacrifice his career for a nice office and an easy practice." Ferguson well recognizes the mistake he is about to make in terms of his medical career. Though he claims to be "delighted" by the opportunity, in reality he "looked so glum" after speaking to one of the doctors about his acceptance of it. Already, with the decision he has made, Ferguson is becoming more and more like Cunningham.

This potential of developing into Cunningham is taken away after Laura breaks off the engagement, which means Ferguson loses the offer of the associateship and the chance to progress himself through the Hudson family connections. However, the chain of events instead offers Ferguson another alternate future: becoming a Levine. This oncepromising intern gave up the chance to "be somebody" when he married. Disowned by his wealthy mother, he was forced to discontinue his studies in order to go into private practice to support his wife. The facts of his life since he left the hospital bear out his loss. When Levine first went into practice, he was sure and confident. He wouldn't allow Hochberg to help him even a little bit. However, without connections, as Ferguson now is, Levine was reduced to "Tenements! Fifty-cent patients! Poverty! Dirt! Struggle!" The past six years have been a struggle for Levine and his wife, who has since developed tuberculosis. When Ferguson first meets Levine, the former intern presents the picture of a man whom life has beaten down, with his shabby clothing and worry lines crossing his forehead. By the end of the play, desperately trying to build up a new practice in Colorado, he is reduced to begging Hochberg for the loan of a few dollars.

Levine has come to feel some sense of regret for the choices he made in the past. He considers Ferguson lucky to have the opportunity to study with Hochberg and sighs sadly when speaking of the same opportunities that he squandered. Kingsley makes the parallelism clear: If Ferguson follows through on his intention of marrying and going into private practice to earn a living, he will become like Levine, haunted by bitterness and the memories of what he gave up. Levine considers himself a "human sacrifice," and Ferguson will undoubtedly become another sacrifice, with his ambitions and ideals destroyed.

One other future faces Ferguson, a future represented by Hochberg himself. Hochberg has devoted his life to his work and urges Ferguson, whom he believes has great potential, to follow in his footsteps. His dedication to the medical profession shows itself in his utter lack of personal life; with Ferguson, he talks only of patients and of the studies that lie ahead. The rest of the doctors, as well as discerning patients such as Hudson, greatly revere Hochberg. When he enters the library where they gather, he is immediately bombarded with requests and opinions. Hochberg has earned this position because he placed his medical career above everything else. He continually reminds Laura that Ferguson needs to concentrate on his studies, holding out as an example a doctor who works with him now who "even has a cot rigged up in one of the laboratories" to ease his 16-plus hour days. As Ferguson's mentor, Hochberg will undoubtedly sculpt the younger man into a version of himself.

While Bailey finds Hochberg a sympathetic character who is "full of wisdom and patience," other readers may choose to question the surgeon's narrow focus and its accompanying lack of humanity. His attitude is most clearly seen when he learns of Ferguson's intention to marry Barbara. Calling Ferguson's desire to do the honorable thing "[M]id-Victorian idealism," he urges Ferguson to reconsider letting this "accident . . . ruin yourself—the rest of your life—destroy your ambition." He believes that in helping a woman whose ruin he helped bring about, Ferguson will merely be "throwing his life away." With his admonitions, he reveals his essential belief that nothing is important but the medical profession. He puts the important work that good doctors do—saving lives—ahead of everything else.

At the end of the play, with Barbara's sudden death, Ferguson has the chance to choose between these three models or to carve out his own style of doctoring. After Laura rescinds her earlier demands that he give up his studies with Hochberg, declaring that she will marry him nonetheless, Ferguson has the opportunity to combine his professional love and his personal love. Instead, Ferguson decides to follow in Hochberg's footsteps. He affirms his commitment to the medical profession when he tells Laura "This is where I belong!" Ferguson has come to accept, like Hochberg before him, that for the physician the reward is in "something richer than simply living"—it is in sacrificing his own life to the greater need of society.

Source: Rena Korb, Critical Essay on *Men in White,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

Warren is a freelance writer with a master of fine art's degree in writing from Vermont College. In this essay, he explores the deeper issues of this staged production as they contributed to its Broadway success.

Sidney Kingsley's three-act play, *Men in White,* is a mix of social commentary on moral issues and soapopera drama. But more than this, it is a deeply felt philosophical treatise on humanity. The visible, driving emotional force of the play is a young intern's struggle to integrate his career with an upcoming marriage. Its hospital setting uses lifeand-death issues, love, and betrayal to pull the audience toward a conclusion. The drama of the intern's tortured conscience over a sexual impropriety, which eventually causes the death of a young nurse, rakes the conclusion with profundity. The actual cause of her death, a botched, back-street abortion, becomes an underlying moral theme, seldom discussed in the 1930s. Beneath this veneer, however, many other serious issues are brought forth: medical ethics, the economics of medicine following the Depression, integrity in actions, and altruism in a most dedicated form.

Rather than using medicine as a mere setting for entertainment, Kingsley takes on the philosophical issues of ethics, truthfulness, compassion, altruism, and even greed, in a very simple, yet dramatic format. One line, brought into the body of the text through the remembered voice of the young intern's father, sums up Kingsley's theme for *Men in White:* "My dad used to say, 'Above all is humanity!' He was a fine man—my dad." The intern goes on to say how his father died because he refused to give up medicine as a career in favor of his own health. Then he says, "Above all else is humanity—that's a big thought. So big that alongside of it you and I don't really matter very much. That's why we do it, I guess." Kingsley's ideas about personal values come through in scene after scene. Had he not become a playwright and actor, he may well have become a physician or some other server of humanity.

Along with praise, reviewers and critics have found fault with *Men in White,* yet it was a triumph on stage and screen. In a review in *Sidney Kingsley: Five Winning Plays,* edited by Nena Couch, Thomas E. Luddy of Salem State College in Massachusetts says that the usual response of critics to Kingsley's plays has been that "they practice outdated dramaturgy (19th-century naturalism), argue a suspect sociology (determinism), and embrace a dead politics (socialism)." In the 1930s, ideas of the nineteenth-century may have become stale to the point of feeling outdated, but it was these elements that contributed to the success of Men in White. Kingsley's use of personal struggle and dedication in an unkind world gave its audience a point of identification. Luddy believes, however, that because of "the writing power, the mastery of issues, and complexity of the stage vision," Kingsley's plays have a permanent place in the theatre. The themes and style of Kingsley's plays can be seen in many contemporary TV shows. Social elements and laws of nature, always present in society and often presented as dramatic themes, create an emotional impact for an audience.

One person who thought little of Kingsley's writing power in *Men in White* and of his mastery of issues was Elia Kazan. Kazan was a member of the Group Theatre company, as was Kingsley, that first performed *Men in White* in 1933. In his autobiography, *A* Life, published in 1988, Kazan wrote that it was "the style of Lee Strasberg's production and their own [the Group's] ensemble playing [that] had provided Sidney Kingsley's bone-bare text with what it didn't deserve." What it didn't deserve, according to Kazan, was its great success on Broadway, and the Pulitzer Prize it won the following year. It was even the "first great success" for the Group, said Kazan, giving its members "a long flow of full salaries." In 1934, while still on Broadway, *Men in White* was released as a film by MGM, starring Clark Gable and Myrna Loy. It was a success, although Kazan never acknowledged its attributes. Its issues and emotional base did not make it a success for Kazan.

MGM recognized the opportunity for success with Kingsley's theme and issues, however; issues common to all societies, issues of substance, brought forth through love, death, and sacrifice. This is dramaturgy with naturalism that reaches across social boundaries. Beyond soap-opera dramatizing, the emotional impact of the issues thrives.

In reading only the script, it is true that the dialogue, settings, and characterizations are all quite average. The story is simple, the scenes minimal. Yet, when reading the original text as published by Covici Friede in 1933, with footnotes intact, it is apparent that Kingsley's purpose was not merely to create an actable play, with hopes of stardom, but rather to purport some profound philosophical ideas. His dedication of the play reads "To the men in medicine who dedicate themselves, with quiet heroism, to man." Following the dedication in the text, and before the opening scene of the play, Kingsley places a lengthy excerpt from the Hippocratic oath, which as Kingsley says, "physicians have bound themselves since the days of antique Greece." As an oath, it is a most serious commitment for men of medicine, meant to bind them with heart, mind, and spirit to the principles of altruism. They are sworn by "all the gods and goddesses" to do only good for the benefit of the sick and all men.

Through the play's dialogue, Kingsley speaks seriously about the nature of humanity, of the importance of man's humanity toward his fellows as being the most important element of their lives. In the hospital setting, it is the service of the physician to his patients—above all else—be it home, health, money, or personal need that he attempts to bring forth. However, it is in the footnotes of the original text where Kingsley records not only his own views on these issues, but backs them up with serious thought from respected sages of the past. Some footnotes are merely historical in nature or give medical definitions to the reader, while others are educational, regarding advances in anesthesia and sterilization techniques. Many of Kingsley's more serious concerns are brought out in the footnotes of the opening pages. A footnote on the first page of dialogue quotes the German born physician and researcher Hermann Nothnagel: "All knowledge attains its ethical value and its human significance only by the humane sense in which it is employed. Only a good man can be a great physician." He makes a footnote reference to the enormous bulk of information that had come to the science of medicine by then, and to the great task of the physician to absorb and use it. Another footnote quote is by Karl Marx, from Garrison's *History of Medicine*: "The education of

most people ends upon graduation; that of the physician means a lifetime of incessant study." Throughout both footnote and text, Kingsley continues to make a strong case for the seriousness and dedication needed to succeed in medicine. The principles of a dedicated humanity are extremely important to this author.

Perhaps the play's most important issue, and the one it is most often remembered for, is abortion. While abortion plays a prominent part in the stage production, it is also discussed in the footnotes. Kingsley takes the issue seriously. He comments clearly on the criminal state of abortion: politically, ethically, and socially. Expanding on a footnoted quote by a former president of the American Medical Association on the number of abortions in New York and Chicago being greater than the number of children born, Kingsley says:

Most of these operations are performed on otherwise respectable, law-abiding, married women. Proof enough that here is another social problem that can't be eliminated by legislation. No one wants to encourage the indiscriminate use of this grim practice. However, the lash of the law, instead of correcting the evil, only whips it into dark corners, creating a vicious class of criminal practitioner—bootleg doctors and ignorant midwives who work in dark, back-room apartments. A saner, healthier attitude is that adopted by the Soviet government, which is fostering birth control education, and instituting legal abortion clinics in a spirit best expressed by the motto inscribed over the door of one such clinic: 'You are welcome this time, but we hope you will never have to come here again.'

The Group Theatre ensemble produced plays that dealt with moral issues. When Kingsley presented his "bare-bones text" to the Group, he opened the door for the rest of the process to complete itself—that process being creativity. Kazan was right in this regard, that the play needed a skilled ensemble to present it. When a dramatic work is written as a play, it is never finished on the page. Not until it is interpreted and performed by its actors is it a completed work. Kingsley was able to, with his simple presentation and complex issues, give his players just the right formula for a successful performance. Its ingredients were: an altruistic and well meaning leading man; an obstacle for the leading man in terms of a fiancée who doesn't fully understand his need for dedication to medicine; a small but important outside love interest; a plotdriving mentor, always pushing for the hero's success; one less-than-competent wealthy physician; comic relief in the form of two rather less-thanserious interns; a serious sociopolitical issue of the day (i.e., the state of medicine and hospitals in a floundering society recovering from a major Depression); and a seldom discussed social issue, abortion. Without the depth and intensity of the emotional issues, this may well have been bare-bones. But it is not and was not bare-bones, not when the surface had been pierced by the accomplished actors of the Group, who were able to bring all of the background sentiments and seriousness of the issues to the foreground. They brought personal feelings and experience to the stage and created believable, flesh-and-blood characters.

Apart from the emotional intrigue of the play, Kingsley did a successful job with pacing to give it dramatic impact (even with its contemporary soapopera flare). At the end of the

first act the hero has an undescribed, but obvious, sexual liaison. At the end of act 2 he is in the operating room helping to undue the damage he had done at the end of act 1 (the girl with whom he had a sexual liaison had an abortion outside the hospital and was at the hospital due to complications from a botched underground procedure). Meanwhile, the hero's fiancée is also in attendance and discovers that her fiancé is the cause of the poor girl's condition. This is the major plot point of the entire play. At the end of act 3, all truth is revealed and actualized. The young nurse dies, from even more complications, the hero is sent into the world with a blessing to do his best for humanity and himself, and the fiancée has understood and accepted his need for dedication and service, somewhat forgiving him for his indiscretion. Her parting words are, "Maybe some day we'll get together, anyway." An audience loves the possibility of happily ever after.

Sidney Kingsley wrote a number of plays. Some were successful and some not, but the success of *Men in White* came from not only the drama of life, death, love, and sex, along with a talented ensemble and receptive audience, but also from the depth of the author's obviously heartfelt issues involving medicine and altruism. Men in White was a combination of elements that worked.

Source: Ray Warren, Critical Essay on *Men in White,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #3

Kryhoski is currently working as a freelance writer. In this essay, she considers the social impact of Kingsley's play on his contemporaries.

Sidney Kingsley's *Men in White* had a profound impact on American audiences of the 1930s. The production was amongst only a handful of theatrical successes set against the backdrop of the depression era and Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The play earned Kingsley a Pulitzer Prize, remarkable for a work represented by stilted, or stiff, cookie-cutter character types and a rather predictable story line. It was an obvious victory, however, when noting the work's consideration of the medical profession. Kingsley specifically created Dr. Ferguson, a young rising star and physician, to illuminate this addiction to the medical profession. It is the audience which then becomes hooked, however, captivated by a young doctor's ineffectual struggle to separate his professional from his personal life.

Kingsley uses his characters to convey the progressive, powerful nature of modern medicine. At the outset of the play, Dr. McCabe is "worried" by all of the "new medical literature" that "keeps piling up," fearing "it will all end in confusion." Dr. Hochberg agrees, adding, "where the sciences in general are going to end, with their mass of detail—nobody knows." The practice of medicine is depicted by McCabe and Hochberg as an everchanging frontier, a science constantly reinventing itself, creating new challenges for practitioners. There is never enough for a physician to observe, to learn, to accomplish.

Central to the play is Dr. Ferguson, a physician and rising star. He is a young doctor consumed by his passion for medicine. He too marvels at his dedication to medicine, admitting that "it wasn't much fun . . . but still . . . it's the only thing I really want to do." He later adds "above all else is humanity—that's a big thought. So big that alongside of it you and I don't really matter very much." According to Ferguson, medicine is a power far greater than he is, a force he cannot understand but to which he is compelled to respond. This idea is pivotal to understanding Kingsley's work-medical crises at the hospital prove to be uncontrollable lifechanging events for his characters, both professionally and personally.

Evangeline Morphos, in her work "Sidney Kingsley's *Men in White,*" discusses Kingsley's insistence on creating a realistic hospital environment as a factor in characterization and as a function of unity for the play. On the subject, she quotes Kingsley: "I take a long time developing a play because I am developing a whole environment, on the premise that a man's—or woman's—environment is enormously important to their life and their life's work." This statement gives credence to Morphos's idea that Kingsley's hospital environment creates unity and confines the action to a single location. The idea of confinement is of central importance to the struggle occurring throughout the work, that of a young doctor attempting to juggle his personal relationships with his professional duties. During the course of the play Ferguson's life is illuminated only within the walls of the hospital. Neither he nor any of the other

characters are observed elsewhere. Kingsley, from the outset, successfully presents a view of medicine as being more than a profession—it is an all-consuming lifestyle.

Morphos comments on the subject matter of the work, stating "*Men in White* presents a series of crises set against the backdrop of hospital life. The ultimate crisis involves a young intern's choice between his fiancée and his research." Ferguson's personal struggle to create a balance between his relationship with his fiancée Laura and hospital life serves to create tension in the play. In several instances, Ferguson is called upon by the hospital staff and must choose between his personal plans with Laura and his obligation to the hospital. Despite his desire for a relationship, Ferguson consistently makes choices that sabotage any efforts with Laura.

In act 1, scene 2, an intimate moment between lovers is interrupted by a loudspeaker call and Laura stating "don't move," only to be countered by Ferguson, who exclaims "It's no use, Laura! That's my call! Let me up!" Laura pleads her case with him, only to find out that he has also rejected her plans for the evening in order to perform a blood transfusion. This inspires yet another serious conversation and an ultimatum from Laura. What is of interest here concerns Ferguson's response to the situation. Laura has just threatened to "break off now and try to forget" him, yet he is once again distracted by the loud speaker. He forgoes any attempts to resolve the conflict and becomes instantly engrossed in the medical emergency at hand.

Ferguson's reaction to his argument with Laura is to take comfort in an affair with Barbara, a nurse who can understand his struggles as a doctor. It is Barbara's passion for medicine to which Ferguson is drawn. Ferguson's affair, however damaging, is little more than a predictable reflex action. The attraction medicine holds for him compels Ferguson to respond to crises in a particular manner. Based on his responses, it is easy to anticipate the failure of Ferguson's relationship with Laura, despite his desire for the relationship. Medicine is the ultimate force driving him, inhibiting his ambitions to pursue any life outside of the hospital. It is also easy to empathize with Ferguson because he operates under the illusion of free choice, when in fact, the audience can already see he has none.

It is a bizarre love triangle (Laura/Ferguson/ medicine) playing on a swell of emotion from the audience as tension rises and falls, scene by scene. Estelle Manette Raben, in her piece "Men in White and Yellow Jacket as Mirrors of the Medical Profession," comments on Ferguson's commitment to medicine, claiming that "the hospital presents its demand for a type of almost religious celibacy." She continues, observing "doctors are thereby exhaulted to a position that the public seems to have wanted them to occupy and that doctors were all too willing to accept—namely, a total devotion to their profession." As Raben also points out, this is clearly apparent in the case of Dr. Levine, who chose marriage over medical training. The consequence of his decision, the audience comes to learn, is that he is left with both an ailing career as well as an ailing wife and has been disowned by his mother. In act 1, scene 4, Levine speculates on the opinion of one of his former professors, stating "I know just what he says: Levine—the fool!—wealthy mother—chance to work with Hochberg—to be somebody. Threw it all away . . . for a pretty face."

However understandable this devotion to medicine may be, the victims of Ferguson's professional devotion happen to be women. Women are on the periphery of this medical mayhem, their protests muted. Raben provides clarification on this point. She identifies within the body of the work the existence of what she calls "institutionalized sexism," which "manifests itself through every female character." This idea is readily observable—the main females characters of the play, whether nurse or fiancée, are portrayed as impediments to Ferguson's professional progress and are sacrificed for his sake.

Laura is characterized as being a selfish, impulsive child rather than a competent adult. Often Hochberg's interaction with Laura is that of an overbearing father chiding or scolding his ill-behaved daughter rather than a mutual discussion between respectful adults. Hochberg expends considerable effort to influence the course of Ferguson's professional career, not with Laura's help but despite what he clearly views to be her interference, without respect for the couple or their wedding plans. In act 2, scene 2, for example, Hochberg responds to Laura, who has just returned with Ferguson from their wedding rehearsal, saying "Laura, you deserve to be spanked! Don't you realize what that boy's work means?" Hochberg engages in this dialogue repeatedly throughout the course of the play. Laura is consistently portrayed as an impediment or roadblock to Ferguson's progress, not appreciated as a supportive figure in his life.

Barbara is the object of Ferguson's desires and a victim of an illegal abortion. While the audience is never privileged to learn the details of their onenight stand, the event does cost the nurse her life. Even more startling, as critic Raben is also quick to point out, is Hochberg's reaction in act 3, scene 1, to the news that Ferguson is responsible for the pregnancy. He immediately suggests to Ferguson that, if Ferguson did not force himself on the girl, he should not feel responsible for her unwanted pregnancy nor her dismissal from the hospital. Furthermore, when Ferguson comments on the fact that Barbara has been thrown out of the hospital, her life disgraced by the incident, Hochberg refutes Ferguson's idea to marry her and is quick to remark, "Don't worry. We'll find something for her." Hochberg simply dismisses a grave situation as being a casual mistake rather than acknowledging what is really a terrible tragedy for one young woman.

It is easy to surmise or guess that the female characters only serve as impediments or roadblocks to medical progress. Ferguson, at the end of the play, has gone through several major crises—he has contemplated a loveless marriage, faced the deadly consequences of an irresponsible affair, and dismissed his fiancée—yet he returns to medicine, seemingly unchanged by this dramatic chain of events. Raben has a rather interesting theory behind this behavior, stating "the women in the play function essentially as props to emphasize the male doctors' superior social status and commitment." The main female characters in the play are presented as hurdles to Ferguson's professional success. Laura is portrayed as the self-centered, childish, demanding fiancée and Barbara as a life burden to Ferguson. Throughout the play Ferguson struggles with the idea of coupling his romantic life with his professional life, but by the play's end he is unable to synthesize both aspects of self, all attempts at compromise having failed. Ferguson's triumph is his return to medicine despite his personal challenges.

Scientific thought is presented as the superior rationale, an idea mirroring the work of one of Kingsley's contemporaries, Aldous Leonard Huxley, author of *Brave New World.* Huxley's novel is much like Kingsley's play, insomuch as it has been called a novel of concepts or ideas, the characters having little depth, not unlike Kingsley's characters. Nor is Kingsley's hospital terribly different, philosophically speaking, than Huxley's utopia. In utopia, babies are produced in a lab, born and classified by order of intelligence. The children are conditioned psychologically after birth to excel in a specific, predetermined profession based on their intelligence—not unlike Ferguson's environment, one fostered by his father and society at large. In utopia, Hypnopaedia is just one of the psychological techniques employed, by utilizing the power of suggestion. This method induces people to behave in certain ways. During the course of the play, Dr. Hochberg engages in a similar type of mental conditioning or priming when speaking to Ferguson of his future career objectives, and as a result retains him as an understudy. Utopia, not unlike Kingsley's world of medicine, also encourages reliance on the scientific, the rational, rather than a dependence on the emotional world. Finally, utopia is an emotionless world run entirely by men, not unlike St. George's Hospital.

Sidney Kingsley and Aldous Huxley had separate artistic agendas. Huxley's novel was a social commentary warning of world like utopia based on the nature of contemporary society, whereas *Men in White* celebrated it. Juxtaposing or comparing the works makes clear the climate and influences Kingsley was working under, and explains his success as a playwright with the completion of *Men in White.* The idealistic content of the play was responding to an audience enchanted with scientific advancement and captivated by the nobility, and also by the heroism of practicing medicine. This sentiment is perhaps captured best by the words of Hippocrates, who believes that "where the love of man is, there also is the love of the art of healing."

Source: Laura Kryhoski, Critical Essay on *Men in White,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Adaptations

Men in White was adapted for the screen in 1934 by Waldemar Young. It was directed by Richard Boleslawsky, produced by MGM, and starred Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Jean Hersholt, and Elizabeth Allan.

Topics for Further Study

Research the abortion issue in the United States from the 1930s to the present day. How did abortion come to be legalized? Which groups support and which oppose abortion today? What are the reasons given by each side for their viewpoints?

The 1930s saw a number of important discoveries in the medical and surgical fields. Research what accomplishments doctors made during this period and explain how these accomplishments affected the quality of life and health.

Kingsley's other plays also focus on important social issues. Read either *Dead End or Detective Story*. Then analyze the selected work in terms of what social problem(s) it presents and any solutions suggested.

Nena Couch writes in her introduction to *Sidney Kingsley, Five Prizewinning Plays* that Kingsley's "pioneering work for the stage led the way for new genres," such as hospital and doctor dramas like *ER. Compare Men in White* to a modern hospital drama. How are the two works similar? How are they different?

The doctors in *Men in White* make several references to potential changes in the government's relationship with the medical establishment. Research how Americans in the 1930s felt about reforming the country's health care system. How did members of the medical community feel about potential reforms? What, if any, reforms took place?

Men in White raises many important social issues. Make a list of some of these and then determine if these issues are still relevant to today's society. Explain your assertions.

Compare and Contrast

1930s: Three out of every four Americans polled in the mid-to late 1930s want the government to help pay for medical care.

Today: A 1999 poll conducted by NBC and *The Wall Street Journal* shows that two out of three Americans believe the federal government should guarantee health care to all citizens.

1930s: Only about 5 percent of all medical students are women.

Today: Women make up close to half of all medical students, and more women than men are applying to medical school.

1930s: Because many Americans cannot pay for their medical care, the U.S. government initiates changes in health insurance as well as changing its own role in providing money for health care.

Today: Despite an effort led by President Bill Clinton to reform the health care system and provide medical coverage for all Americans, many Americans-nearly one in four-still lack health care and medical insurance. By the end of the decade, 42 million Americans have no health insurance while another 20 million Americans are under-insured.

1930s: In 1933 the average hospital stay is two weeks.

Today: In 1998 the average hospital stay is 5.1 days.

1930s: In 1932 tax funds pay for 14 percent of the national medical bill.

Today: In 1998 government funds pay for just over 50 percent of all hospital care and physician services expenditures.

1930s: In 1931 there are 156,440 physicians in the United States, or about 12.74 physicians per 10,000 American citizens. Doctors are clustered in the cities and are rare in rural areas.

Today: In 1998 there are 777,900 medical doctors in the United States, or about 29.03 doctors per 10,000 American citizens.

1930s: Feminist Margaret Sanger, appalled by the deaths from self-induced abortions that she witnessed as a nurse in New York City, pioneers the birth control movement in the United States. Before a federal law legalized the dissemination of birth control information in 1938, one of every four maternal deaths is due to abortion. In 1933, 58 pregnant women out of every 1,000 die.

Today: Birth control and abortion are legal, but there are continuing challenges to the laws governing these practices. In 1997, 1 pregnant woman out of every 1,000 dies.

Further Study

Abbott, Berenice, *New York in the Thirties,* Dover Publications, 1974.

This volume collects photographer Abbot's blackand-white shots of New York City during the Depression years.

Clurman, Harold, *The Fervent Years: The Group Theatre and the Thirties,* Da Capo Press, 1988.

Clurman, a member of the Group Theater (which first produced *Men in White*), chronicles the birth and development of this drama company.

"Conversations with . . . Sidney Kingsley," interview by John Guare and Ruth Goetz, in *Dramatists Guild Quarterly,* Autumn 1984, pp. 8, 21-31.

Two noted playwrights discuss Kingsley's plays, background, and theatrical history with Kingsley.

McElvaine, Robert S., *The Great Depression:* America, 1929-1941, Time Books, 1994.

McElvaine's revised edition focuses on the human consequences of the Great Depression.

Watkins, T. H., *The Great Depression: America in the 1930s*, Little Brown & Co., 1995.

In this companion piece to the PBS series of the same title, Watkins chronicles American life in the 1930s. The book includes many illustrations.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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

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