Morning Walk Study Guide

Morning Walk by Claire Malroux

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Claire Malroux's "Morning Walk" was first published in French in her poetry collection *Aires*. Translated by American poet Marilyn Hacker, the English version of "Morning Walk" appears as the first poem in the collection *Edge* published by Wake Forest University Press.

Like many poems in *Edge*, "Morning Walk" addresses the themes of aging and the inevitable progression of time, as it explores the porous boundaries between different realms: life and death, the natural and the human, and the actual and the spiritual. The poem evokes both a physical and a psychological landscape, as the speaker observes elements in the world while taking a morning walk through her environs. The place she walks through is not specified□the poem could take place anywhere where there are buildings and trees. It seems to be an urban neighborhood, although it is filled with grassy spots, indicating parks or lawns. The poem moves through several tonal shifts, swinging between reticent pessimism and admiration, but concludes on an optimistic note celebrating the spiritual authority of nature. Malroux uses metaphor, simile, and personification to convey the ideas and images in the poem. These devices serve to underscore her ideas about the inter-relatedness of different worlds.

Author Biography

Claire Malroux was born September 3, 1935 in the small, rural town of Albi in southwestern France. The daughter of two elementary school teachers, Augustin and Paule Malroux, she grew up in Albi and in Paris. Malroux's book-length lyric narrative poem *A Long-Gone Sun* (France, 1998; New York, 2000) recollects her childhood during World War II, including her father's involvement with the French Resistance, which led in 1945 to his incarceration and death in the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

Malroux is the author of seven collections of poetry in French. (Her works in French have been published under the name Claire Sara Roux.) "Morning Walk" is from *Edge*, her first poetry book translated into English. *Edge* (1996) comprises poems from two of Malroux's collections in French, *Aire* and *Entre nous et la lumière*, as well as a number of previously uncollected poems. *Edge*, *A Long-Gone Sun*, and Malroux's forthcoming poetry collection *Birds and Bison* were translated into English by American poet Marilyn Hacker, who has been translating Malroux's work since meeting Malroux in 1989 at a conference in Grenoble. Hacker, who lives in Paris for part of each year, has also translated the poetry of other contemporary French poets, including Vénus Khoury-Ghata, Guy Goffette, Hédi Kaddour, and Marie Etienne.

In addition to her own poetry, Malroux is acclaimed for her translations of poetry and prose from English into French, including the writings of Emily Dickinson, Derek Walcott, Elizabeth Bishop, Emily Brontë, Edith Wharton, and Joyce Carol Oates. She has been awarded the French Legion of Honor for her translations of Dickinson's writings, as well as the Grand Prix National de la Traduction in 1995, and the Prix Maurice Edgar Coindreau in 1990.

Plot Summary

Stanza 1

In "Morning Walk," an unnamed speaker describes her observations of the natural and human-made world as she takes a morning stroll. Throughout the poem, the speaker's observations of the awakening world inspire her thoughts on subjects such as death and time. The poem opens with a metaphor comparing the sky, glimpsed between buildings, to the ocean: "The white ocean in which birds swim / Between the chimneys." The whiteness of the sky may be due to clouds, smoke, or the early morning light, but the lack of color creates a mood of stillness and quietude.

The opening image leads directly to the strange question in lines 3—5: "Is it a dream / Beginning over again, or is it / The antiseptic other side of death?" The first part of the question leads the reader to believe that the speaker will question whether what she sees (the sky) is dream or reality, but instead she introduces a different idea by wondering whether what she sees is something from the realm of the non-living. By posing this question, the poet conflates the observable world of sky, buildings, and birds with an imagined afterlife, which like the white sky is antiseptic or overly clean and blank. The first section concludes with this somewhat pessimistic image.

Stanza 2

In the first stanza of the second section, the speaker describes the effects of the rising morning sun. The sun transforms the pale human-made world by adding color and vitality to it: "The sun displays its face-paints / On a pallid stone wall / Bedecks the buildings / For luminous tournaments." Malroux uses personification to portray the sun, which gaily exhibits its hues and dresses the world in preparation for daily activities. The speaker's tone in this stanza is optimistic as she expresses admiration for the sun's power.

In the next stanza, however, the speaker returns to a more melancholic tone, as she observes that it takes very little time to erase the darkness of night but that the effects of aging persist: "It takes so few hours / To smooth away the night / While our wrinkles are / Irreversible." The speaker's admiration for the sun's energy has given way to her concerns about aging and time's inevitable progress. She implies that with each turning of night and day, human beings are marked by time in an unflattering way. In line 12, Malroux implicates the reader by stating "our wrinkles." All of humanity is affected by time's daily march, not just the speaker or the poet.

Stanza 3

The tone shifts again in stanza 3, as the speaker observes other daily events while she continues her morning walk. In lines 14—15, she imagines the windows alert and

awakening as the morning unfolds, "Watchful, the windows / Open their eyelids." Using personification throughout this stanza, she then describes the grass continuing to slumber in line 16. In lines 17—18, Malroux uses a simile to further portray the grass, "Like an old child / sucking the earth." The simile is paradoxical, since infants are not old. In this simile the natural and human worlds are blended, as the grass is likened to a baby and the earth to its mother. The tone in this stanza is contemplative, neither particularly sad nor exuberant.

Stanza 4

In this short final stanza, Malroux again uses personification, as the speaker describes the trees she sees: "The trees, chasubled in sparrows / Will always be ready to bless the day." A chasuble is a sleeveless outer garment worn by priests during mass. The sparrows in this stanza cover the trees like an official robe, and the trees act like priests by being willing to bless each day. In this section as in the previous one, Malroux conflates the natural and the human worlds. She also ascribes spiritual authority to the natural world, as the trees have the power to bless the day. After several tone shifts, the poem concludes on an optimistic note, with the speaker observing how nature presides over each successive day.

Themes

Morning/The Sun

As the title indicates, the poem takes place in the morning, as the speaker walks through her environs. In the poem, morning is a time of change, when night's darkness is smoothed away by the mighty sun. In the second stanza, the speaker observes the effects of the sun's rising and how the light transforms the "pallid stone wall" and buildings into colorful and vital beings prepared "For luminous tournaments." Morning is also the time of the world's awakening as in lines 14—15 when "windows / open their eyelids." The sun is a symbol of transformative power; however, its daily rising also signals the passage of time, another theme of the poem.

Aging/Wisdom

The speaker laments the inevitable progress of time and its aging effects on human beings in lines 10—13 when she says, "It takes so few hours / To smooth away the night / While our wrinkles are / Irreversible." The sun's daily appearance and its energizing effects on the environment come at a price, as this very sun also fosters and illuminates the unappealing markers of time. The speaker's anxiety about aging is introduced in the first stanza of the poem when she wonders if the sky she sees between chimneys is "a dream / Beginning over again, or is it / The antiseptic other side of death?" Aging entails moving closer to death, and these lines express the speaker's fear of the non-existence following death, toward which the aging process draws her. However, aging also seems to entail peacefulness in the poem, as the speaker describes the grass as it "sleeps profoundly / Like an old child / Sucking the earth." This paradoxical simile□infants are typically very young□conveys the image of a wise baby unaffected by the comings and goings of the sun (unlike the alertly "watchful" windows). In the poem, the passage of time is cyclical as well as linear, as day repeatedly follows night, and in this image the old and the very young are blended together.

Mutability

The blending of seemingly opposing elements or characteristics occurs throughout the poem, supporting the theme of mutability or the interrelatedness of different worlds. In this poem as in other poems in *Edge*, the borders between realms are quite porous, and images frequently slip from old to young, inanimate to human, living to nonexistent, and earthly to spiritual. For example, Malroux frequently mixes together the human and the natural, often employing personification to do so, as in lines 19—20: "The trees, chasubled in sparrows / Will always be ready to bless the day." The trees act like priests, and the image moves from the natural earthly world to the spiritual realm of blessing. In the poem's first stanza, Malroux begins with a description of physical reality, which involves two different elements, the sea and the sky, which then become the

psychological phenomenon of the dream, only to mutate once again into another realm altogether, the imagined "other side of death." The poem's shifting descriptions express the idea that things are interconnected in mysterious and intrinsic ways.

Nature

The natural world, including the planets, embodies power in the poem. The sun has the power to make the formerly drab earth vital and vigorous. While humans and human-made objects such as windows are subject to the sun's power, the natural elements such as the grass remain unaffected by the sun's rising, profoundly slumbering on. In the last stanza, Malroux ascribes spiritual authority to other natural elements, the trees, which have the ability to give benediction to each day. The speaker seems to take comfort in nature's steady capacities.

Style

Personification

Personification is a technique by which the poet ascribes human qualities to non-human objects or ideas. Malroux uses personification throughout the poem to describe what the speaker sees. In the second section of the poem, the sun is personified as it shows its "face-paints" like a person at a carnival and "bedecks the buildings" as if dressing the buildings for lively events. The sun is further personified in the next stanza, as it "smoothes away the night," as if it were a person smoothing out a piece of cloth. In the third section, both the windows opening "their eyelids" and the grass, which "sleeps profoundly," are given the qualities of a person in the morning, awakening or continuing to sleep. In line 18 of that stanza, the earth is ascribed the characteristics of a mother. In the final section, Malroux personifies the trees as priestly beings, wearing priestly garments (the chasubles) and "ready to bless the day."

By personifying the inanimate objects in the poem, Malroux establishes fluid connections between the human world and the natural and human-made worlds. In the poem, the sun, the earth, windows, grass, trees, and buildings behave like people getting ready for the day. The descriptions of the human-made and natural elements mirror the speaker's actions as she readies herself for the day, enjoying her morning stroll. By using personification, Malroux reinforces the theme of mutability, or the idea that the boundaries between different realms are not as solid as we might think they are. In the world of the poem, objects acquire human characteristics with ease and consistency.

Visual Imagery

Malroux also uses powerful visual images to express her ideas. She sets up a contrast between colorless images conveying lifelessness and colorful images embodying vitality. The colorless images appear in the first two stanzas, beginning with the "white ocean" in the first line. The ocean is a metaphor for the sky, but its whiteness suggests a sight drained of its usual hue and vigor. By the end of the stanza, this ocean/sky has become a reminder of the "antiseptic other side of death." The whiteness of the image becomes associated with nonexistence and a medicinally clean blankness. Malroux also uses colorlessness to describe the "pallid stone wall." Again, in this image, colorlessness is used to express a state of stillness or nonactivity. The pale images contrast with the sun's "face-paints," which imply bright, garish colors. The sun also "bedecks the buildings," presumably in vivid hues expressing vitality and playfulness. Malroux's use of colorlessness and color reinforces her portrayal of the sun as a powerful force as well as the poem's theme of the enduring strength of nature.

Historical Context

Although the poem was written in France during the 1990s, this context has little direct bearing on the poem itself, as it is set in an indeterminate place and time. The details of "Morning Walk" seem to be deliberately universalized: the unnamed speaker takes a morning stroll through a place with trees, grass, the sun, and buildings, and muses about issues such as aging and death. The speaker could be taking a walk anywhere where there are buildings and a few natural elements, and we do not know if she is even in a city, a suburb, or a small village.

It is possible that Malroux constructed the poem in this way to emphasize the universality of the poem's themes. By keeping the details nonspecific, Malroux makes the poem readily accessible to readers everywhere. Most people can relate to the activity of taking a morning walk, and most people have seen the sun rising and have strolled among buildings, trees, and grass. These familiar experiences draw readers into the poem and also reinforce the commonality of the speaker's reflections on aging and facing death. The physical landscape of the poem serves to illustrate the speaker's interior thoughts and feelings, which form the crux of the poem. By making the cultural and geographical context very general, Malroux highlights the meditative, philosophical aspect of the poem, rather than exploring particular contemporary issues. As Marilyn Hacker states in her preface to *Edge*, "Claire Malroux's poems have no political agenda. But, often enough, they subvert expectations by simply using undramatic womanly quotidian gestures to signify the human universal."

Critical Overview

Although *Edge* has only been reviewed by a handful of American critics, this collection in which "Morning Walk" appears has been favorably received. Reviewers have praised the economy and force of Malroux's images as well as her philosophical insights and deployment of poetic structure. Writing in the *Boston Review*, Timothy Donnelly notes that the poems' "bristling intensity, clipped phrasing, and brilliant flashes of imagery are apt to remind many readers of Dickinson, whose work Malroux has translated." In his review in *World Literature Today*, Bruce King lauds Malroux's collection, stating, "Her poetry is unusual in its literary sophistication: it is very structured, yet highly elliptical; it is quiet, reticent, almost anonymous, at times even abstract and generalizing while treating of intense desires."

Reviewers have also praised Hacker's translation of the poems. Writing in *Prairie Schooner*, Eleanor Hamilton concludes, "Marilyn Hacker's choices for English words to correspond to the French are perfectly chosen. Or perhaps it just seems that way, the way great poems seem to set themselves upright on the page because we recognize their truth."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Hong earned her master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the University of Texas's Michener Center for Writers. Her poems have appeared in several literary journals. In the following essay, Hong discusses Malroux's use of metaphor and personification to support the theme of porous boundaries in "Morning Walk."

Like many poems in *Edge*, "Morning Walk" explores the boundaries between different realms: night and day, the natural and the human, life and death, and the actual and the spiritual. For Malroux, these boundaries are highly permeable, and movement between apparently distinct worlds occurs frequently in the poem. In virtually every image, Malroux blends elements from disparate realms, shifting from one aspect to another.

The poem opens with a typically slippery image: "The white ocean in which birds swim / Between the chimneys." In this metaphor, or comparison suggesting likeness between two things, the sky is likened to the sea, but the comparison is so complete that it is as if the sky and the sea□usually distinct elements of the earth□are one. As the stanza continues, other separate realms blur into each other, as the speaker wonders whether what she sees is "a dream / Beginning over again, or is it / The antiseptic other side of death?" The movement in these lines is from the concrete reality of the sky/ocean to the realm of dream to a third realm of nonexistence following death. In the speaker's mind, elements of the earth may be strange reverie or a kind of blank afterlife, and she does not seem to recognize divisions among these usually distinct states. Already, in this opening stanza, Malroux establishes the idea of quick and seamless movement between and among different aspects. One could say that in the mutable world of Malroux's poem, everything morphs and nothing stays in the realm it initially belongs to.

Throughout "Morning Walk," Malroux reinforces this theme of porous boundaries by describing objects in human terms. Using the device of personification, she ascribes human qualities to both natural and human-made things. In the second stanza, the sun acts like an optimistic and jubilant person displaying "its face-paints" as it "Bedecks the buildings." In the fourth stanza, the windows are described as wary people just waking up, "watchful" as they "open their eyelids." In contrast, the relaxed and also personified "grass sleeps profoundly / Like an old child / Sucking the earth." In the final stanza, the "trees, chasubled in sparrows" dress and act like priests always "ready to bless the day." In all these descriptions, there is movement from the inanimate world of nature or buildings to the human world. The description of the trees also establishes connections between the plant world and the animal world of the sparrows. In all the images, Malroux uses personification to shift fluidly from one realm to another, as if there were no boundaries between the human, the natural, and the human-made.

The temporal setting of the poem also emphasizes the theme of permeable boundaries. The poem takes place in the morning, as the strolling speaker notices the world awakening, shifting from night to day. However, this shift takes place gradually as the poem progresses. Malroux also conveys the sense of early morning almost entirely

through her descriptions of the objects, which wake up, slumber on, or initiate the day with their blessings or energy.

The objects' actions, in fact, supplant those of the speaker, who remains noticeably in the background of the action. Malroux never uses the word "I" in the poem to indicate the speaker's actions or thoughts. From the poem's title, we can assume that the speaker is walking through the neighborhood, but in the poem itself, attention is shifted away from the speaker onto the things she sees. Emphasizing the objects in this way, again, reinforces Malroux's blending of the human and the inanimate□it is as if the objects were doing what the speaker would be doing instead of her. This expression of the speaker's presence through the description of objects conveys the idea that the speaker and the objects are one and the same and that the assumed boundaries between human beings and things do not actually exist.

Malroux's de-emphasis of the self in favor of objects is typical of many contemporary French poets. As John Taylor notes in his essay "From Intimism to the Poetics of 'Presence': Reading Contemporary French Poetry," which appears in *Poetry*, a number of French poets including Malroux have a bias toward things, and in crafting their poems, these poets attempt to illuminate and highlight the presence of objects. Unlike American poets, who often focus on the individual's perspective and stress the importance of human consciousness and experience, French poets such as Malroux do not necessarily elevate the human position in that way. These French poets ascribe as much importance to the existence of everyday objects such as trees, cups, and chairs as they do to human beings.

Like many of her contemporaries, Malroux underemphasizes the role of the speaker in her poem, placing the person on the same level as other elements in the poem. The speaker is not portrayed in any detail. We do not know what she looks like, nor do we know where she lives. She could be strolling through any place where there are buildings, grass, and trees. We do not even know if she is a she, since the gender is not specified. As mentioned, the speaker's thoughts, feelings, and actions are conveyed through the depiction of things. From these descriptions, however, we can surmise that the speaker is concerned with the progress of time, the movement toward death, and the process of aging.

In the third stanza, the speaker laments that "It takes so few hours / To smooth away the night / While our wrinkles are / Irreversible." These lines convey the speaker's anxieties about aging and moving closer to the nonexistence of death, as each day progresses. However, even in these lines where the speaker's emotions are conveyed, the speaker's singularity is erased. As Bruce King notes in his review of *Edge* in *World Literature Today*, "These are not poems of the subjective 'I' complaining or making a statement, but rather constructions through which an inner reality is found, articulated, and shaped."

Malroux's use of "our" in line 12 of the poem is significant, as the pronoun involves the reader and perhaps all humanity. In using the plural pronoun rather than the singular "my," Malroux again de-emphasizes the individuality of the speaker and instead directs

attention to the general human condition. Like the other assumed boundaries, the lines between individuals melt away in the world of the poem.

The speaker's concerns about death, aging, and time are universal concerns that all human beings face. Although aging is a central theme that recurs throughout *Edge*, Malroux takes pains to highlight the generalized nature of the theme. Rather than emphasizing her own fears about these processes, the poet stresses the universality of these issues and makes the details in the poem universal as well. Most readers will be familiar with details such as chimneys, the sky, the sea, stone walls, wrinkles, grass, birds, and windows. Most people too have experienced taking a walk through their neighborhood or a city. For French readers in particular, this is a well-known scenario, and as Taylor points out in his essay in *Poetry*, poems in which the speaker takes a meditative stroll through the countryside or Paris occur frequently in contemporary French literature.

Malroux also employs universal symbols such as the sun and the earth, depicting them in familiar ways. The sun symbolizes power, energizing the waking world and pushing out the night, while the earth is depicted as a mother supporting the grass. Regardless of their individual experiences, virtually all readers can recognize these symbols functioning in these ways. By using such familiar details and symbols, Malroux removes barriers between the reader and the poet, enabling the reader to enter the poem's landscape easily and to identify with the issues and situation in the poem. In her preface to the collection, Hacker notes that Malroux is not a feminist or political writer. "Morning Walk" is a meditative poem, employing precise but common images to convey philosophical ideas. Rather than exploring current issues, Malroux elucidates enduring universal themes upon which poets in different time periods and in different cultures have ruminated.

However, Malroux's poem differs from other poetry on these subjects in her unique emphasis on the porosity of boundaries. In Malroux's conception, the reader is also part of the mutable world of the poem, in which the boundaries between things are disregarded, and one moves easily from the human to the natural to the human-made and from dreaming to imagined afterlife to reality again. It is a comforting notion that we too are part of the continuous fabric Malroux depicts, in which borders are illusory and in which the universe is populated with energizing stars, peaceful grass, and beneficent trees.

Source: Anna Maria Hong, Critical Essay on "Morning Walk," in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Topics for Further Study

Research the sun's role in the solar system, noting what kind of star the sun is and how it compares with other stars in the universe. Present your findings, using drawings, charts, photographs, and other graphics to convey the information.

Imagine that you are a very old person, perhaps 100 years old. Write a letter to yourself, describing how it feels to be old and giving yourself advice about how to live your life. Include details about your daily rituals and habits.

Research the geography and history of Paris or another city□perhaps your hometown□and create a walking map of the city. The map should show key sites with information explaining each site's significance. You may want to create your maps using large pieces of craft paper and paints or markers, or using a computerized drawing program.

Research and discuss the health benefits of walking as a recreational sport. Consult health magazines and newspaper articles as well as encyclopedia entries. Interview the director of a walking club such as the American Volkssport Federation to find out more about why walking is a popular pastime in North America and Europe. List the health benefits on the board as you present your findings to your class.

Research how the concept of time has been viewed in different cultures and in different eras. After conducting your research, present your findings to the class. Using a two-columned chart, discuss and list ways in which time is linear or progressive versus cyclical or repeating.

Find a short story, song, or essay on the topic of walking. Play, perform, or read the piece to your class, and then discuss what role walking plays in the character's or author's life.

What Do I Read Next?

Malroux's book-length lyric narrative poem *A Long-Gone Sun* (2000), translated by Marilyn Hacker, recollects Malroux's childhood during World War II, including her father's involvement with the French Resistance, which led to his 1945 incarceration and death in the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen.

Adam Gopnik's collection of twenty-three essays and journal entries about living in Paris in the late 1990s, *Paris to the Moon* (2001), examines national and local events from the point of view of a relocated New Yorker, covering topics as diverse as global capitalism, the decline of French cultural power, haute couture, cooking, sports, and Thanksgiving turkey.

Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, first published in 1964 after the author's death, is his memoir of living in Paris during the 1920s. The book explores the vitality of the city as well as Hemingway's interactions with other expatriate writers, including Gertrude Stein and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

In his essay "Mosaic on Walking," which was first published in the journal *Boulevard* in 1990, poet Mark Rudman ruminates on the solaces and pleasures of walking in New York City. The essay can also be found in *The Best American Essays 1991*, edited by Joyce Carol Oates and Robert Atwan.

Marilyn Hacker's eighth poetry collection, *Squares and Courtyards* (2001), consists of lyric poems revolving around the themes of friendship, travel, cancer, illness, and time.

Venus Khoury-Ghata's *Here There Was Once a Country* (2001) is another poetry collection Hacker translated from French into English. In the collection Khoury-Ghata, a Lebanese writer who has lived in France since 1973, relates events from her childhood in Paris and in Lebanon, where she witnessed a war that killed hundreds of thousands of Lebanese.

Further Study

Barzun, Jacques, *An Essay on French Verse: For Readers of English Poetry*, New Directions Publishing, 1991.

In this book, Barzun analyzes the verse of French poets from the neoclassicists writing in the seventeenth century onward through the contemporary period. He argues for the merits of French poetry, as he explains aspects of the French language and poetic forms.

Drake, David, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Drake elucidates the political thoughts of French intellectuals during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Kelly, Michael, and Margaret Atack, eds., *French Culture and Society: The Essentials*, Edward Arnold, 2001.

Designed for students, this reference book contains concise explanations and entries on individuals, issues, events, and ideas in France since 1918.

Shaw, Mary Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Shaw illuminates French poetry written from the Middle Ages through the present, discussing a wide range of topics, such as genres, politics, and philosophy. The book also contains a glossary of poetic terms.

White, Edmund, *The Flaneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris*, Bloomsbury USA, 2001.

In this nonfiction book, White, who lived in Paris for sixteen years, guides readers through and around Paris's bookshops, boutiques, monuments, palaces, and other city sites, recounting each site's history and stories.

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Taylor, John, "From Intimism to the Poetics of 'Presence': Reading Contemporary French Poetry," in *Poetry*, Vol. 177, No. 1, October—November 2000, pp. 147—61.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) 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, PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

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

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

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

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

Other Features

PfS 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 Poetry 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 PfS series.

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

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

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

Citing Poetry for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry 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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