Mrs. Bathurst Study Guide

Mrs. Bathurst by Rudyard Kipling

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Contents

Introduction

"Mrs. Bathurst" is perhaps Rudyard Kipling' most popular short story. Although his career began as a journalist, it is Kipling's prose sketches and verse that earned him widespread respect as an author at an early age. Henry James considered Kipling the most complete man of genius he had ever known. Authors such as T. S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis acknowledged his influence on their own work.

Kipling's reputation as an author, however, has been under almost constant revision in the twentieth century. Lionel Trilling perceived him as a mere curiosity of the past, a man whose conservative politics eclipsed his literary status. George Orwell was equally dismissive of Kipling. After receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1907, critics agree that Kipling's subsequent career suffered in comparison with the achievement of such early novels as *Kim* and the two volumes of *The Jungle Book*.

"Mrs. Bathurst" incorporates central aspects of Kipling's fiction, including his use of dialect, his complex structure of composition, and his fascination with the sea. The critical reception of the story was enthusiastically positive, though critics have been confused by certain elements. Nonetheless, the story has fascinated readers and critics alike for more than ninety years, and has been at the center of the debate concerning Kipling's reputation as an author.

Author Biography

The son of English parents, Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, India, on December 30, 1865. He and his sister Alice ("Trix") were sent to England for their schooling at an early age, residing with a foster family at Lorne Lodge, a place later immortalized by Kipling in the *House of Desolation*. Kipling's separation from his parents might account for his later interest in children's stories. He attended the United Services College (boarding school) until 1882. He returned to India in 1882 and began to write stories for two newspapers, the *Civil and Military Gazette* and the *Pioneer*. His initial success inspired him to return to England and launch a literary career.

In London, Kipling met Wolcott Balestier, a literary agent from America, and eventually married Balestier's sister Caroline (who was given away at the wedding by the author Henry James). Her estate in Vermont served as the couple's first home and as the site where Kipling wrote the two *Jungle Books* and the critically acclaimed *Kim* (which was finished in 1901). The couple returned to England in 1896 and settled in Sussex. Kipling visited South Africa several times during the Boer War (1899-1902). It was during these trips that Kipling became acquainted both with South African culture and nautical life, important features of "Mrs. Bathurst," which was published in 1904.

On the basis of his successful career as a novelist and poet, Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1907, becoming the first Englishman to receive that honor. The advent of World War I as well as the death of his only son, John, (who was reported missing on his first day in action with the Irish Guards and never found) in 1915 adversely affected his writing. The stories "Mary Postgate" and "Sea Constables," among others, reflect these traumatic experiences.

Some critics contend that his literary interests were secondary to his political beliefs, specifically his support of imperialism. When he was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1936, the pallbearers included politicians, but no writers. Nevertheless, Kipling was a prolific writer who produced a great number of short stories, sketches, and poetry in addition to his four novels. By the time of his death, he was already acknowledged as a major influence on the fiction and poetry of such literary masters as Henry James, Thomas Hardy, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden. Kipling's influence also stretches to later authors like Albert Camus, Umberto Eco, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Plot Summary

"Mrs. Bathurst" takes place in Glengariff, South Africa, in the years following the Boer War (1899- 1902). The main story is told through a conversation between three men and the narrator; the four men discuss the tragic tale of Mrs. Bathurst, a hotel owner in New Zealand, and her lover, Mr. Vickery (also known as "Click"). The preface to the story is an excerpt from a mock-Jacobean tragedy written by Kipling entitled *Lyden's "Irenius"* that narrates a dialogue between a prince and one of his subjects. The themes of the epigraph□disinterested fate and accidental providence□carry over into the story.

,p>The story begins with the narrator running into his friend Mr. Hooper, who is an inspector for the Cape Government Railways. The two men hitch a ride down the tracks on a chalk-car that is being repaired. Mr. Hooper starts to take something out of his pocket to show the narrator, but is interrupted by the shouts of Mr. Pyecroft, an old friend of the narrator's. With Pyecroft is his bulky companion, Sergeant Pritchard. These two visitors climb into the car and introduce themselves to Mr. Hooper.

The conversation turns to the legendary story of "Boy Niven," who lured seven or eight sailors into the woods of British Columbia from port in Vancouver in 1887, promising to give them land. The group of sailors, which included Pritchard and Pyecroft, was court-marshaled for desertion. Sergeant Pritchard then mentions Spit-Kid Jones, a sailor who was also a member of the group and who later married a so-called "coconut-woman" and eventually deserted the ship *Astrild.*

The topic leads Pritchard to make reference to Mr. Vickery, nicknamed "Click" because of his noisy false teeth. Mr. Hooper asks about Click's infamous tattoos. Wary, Pritchard suspects that Mr. Hooper is an agent for the law and begins to leave, remaining only on account of entreaties from all three of the men. The narrator vouches for Mr. Hooper's honesty, and Pritchard apologizes for his suspicion.

Settled once again, the narrator asks why Vickery deserted the navy. Pyecroft replies, "She kep' a little hotel at Hauraki□near Auckland [New Zealand]," implying that the source of Click's departure was a woman. Pyecroft describes the woman, Mrs. Bathurst, as a widow who kept a hotel and wore black silk. Pritchard interrupts to give a personal account of Mrs. Bathurst's generosity of spirit, telling how she often let the sailors rent rooms on credit and how she once reserved four bottles of beer for him during a visit by cutting off a piece of her own hair ribbon and wrapping it around the necks of the bottles. To sum up her character, Pritchard proclaims, "She□she never scrupled to feed a lame duck or set 'er foot on a scorpion at any time of 'er life," indicating a mixture of charity and courage in her personality.

Pyecroft and Pritchard agree that, of all the hundreds of women they have been "intimate" with in their lives, Mrs. Bathurst is one of the most memorable. Pyecroft explains, "'Tisn't beauty, so to speak, nor good talk necessarily. It's just It. Some

women'll stay in a man's memory if they once walk down a street, but most of 'em you can live with a month on end, an' next commission you'd be put to it to certify whether they talked in their sleep or not, as one might say."

The conversation returns to the subject of Mr. Vickery, and Pyecroft relates his most recent encounter with him on the ship *Hierophant,* from which he has just returned. While in port at Cape Town, Pyecroft recalls, Vickery had asked him to go to the cinema at Phyllis's Circus. On the way to the theater, Pyecroft felt strange because of the look on Vickery's face, which reminded him of "those things in bottles in those herbalistic shops at Plymouth. . . [w]hite and crumply things□previous to birth you might say."

At the cinema, Vickery told Pyecroft to pay special attention to the "Home an' Friends" portion of the movie, which showed news footage from Europe.

Then the Western Mail came in to Paddin'ton on the big magic lantern sheet. First we saw the platform empty an' the porters standin' by. Then the engine come in, head on, an' the women in the front row jumped: she headed so straight. Then the doors opened and the passengers came out and the porters got the luggage□just like life. Only□only when any one came down too far towards us that was watchin', they walked right out o' the picture, so to speak. I was 'ighly interested, I can tell you. So were all of us. I watched an old man with a rug 'oo'd drooped a book an' was tryin' to pick it up, when quite slowly, from be'ind two porters□carryin' a little reticule an' lookin' from side to side□comes out Mrs. Bathurst. There was no mistakin' the walk in a hundred thousand. She come forward□right forward□she looked out straight at us with that blindish look which Pritch alluded to. She walked on and on till she melted out of the picture□like□like a shadow jumpin' over a candle, an' as she went I 'eard Dawson in the tickey seats be'ind sing out: 'Christ! There's Mrs. B!' (Excerpt from "Mrs. Bathurst")

Mesmerized by Bathurst's image, Vickery urged Pyecroft to return to the theater for five consecutive nights to watch the scene again. When Pyecroft pauses in his story, Mr. Hooper asks Pyecroft what he thinks of the whole thing. Pyecroft replies that he hasn't quite finished thinking yet, but one thing he knows is that Vickery was a "dumb lunatic" since he was convinced that Mrs. Bathurst was in England looking for him. But, Vickery remained very reserved about the whole affair, in Pyecroft's memory. Pyecroft feared for his own safety, thinking that Vickery would turn violent when the cinema left town and he no longer had access to the "stimulant" of seeing Mrs. Bathurst on film.

Pyecroft concludes the tale: after an hour-long meeting with the Captain, Vickery was sent on an errand to take over naval ammunition left after the war in Blemfontein Fort. The real reason for Vickery's journey, however, was to see the movie image of Mrs. Bathurst once more, since the cinema moved away from Cape Town to Worcester. Pyecroft escorted Vickery to shore and as they parted for the last time, Vickery said cryptically, "Remember, that I am not a murderer, because my lawful wife died in childbed six weeks after I came out." The rest of Vickery's story is "silence," as Pyecroft says, echoing Hamlet's dying words.

Vickery apparently reported to Bloemfontein, oversaw the loading of the ammunition, then disappeared. After the men have thought in silence about Pyecroft's story for a few minutes, Hooper speaks up to tell the group of a curious piece of railway line on the way to Zambesi that runs through a solid teak forest for seventy-two miles without curving. He explains that a month ago he was relieving a sick inspector on that line when he discovered two tramps who had been living in the forest. There had been a thunderstorm and they had been turned into "charcoal" by lightning. The man standing up had false teeth and tattoos on his arms and chest, including one with a crown and an anchor, and the letters "M.V." above.

Pritchard is overcome at the horror of the description. Mr. Hooper brings his hand out of his pockets (perhaps to show his companions the false teeth?), but it is empty. Pyecroft exclaims that, after seeing Vickery's eerie face five nights in a row, he is thankful that the man is dead.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

The narrator of the story sets out one day to visit the *H.M.S. Peridot*, however, when he arrives, he finds the ship has been sent up the coast. Realizing he is stranded until the afternoon train back to Cape Town arrives, the narrator is contemplating what to do when he has the good fortune of running into his friend, Inspector Hooper of Cape Government Railways. Hooper suggests to the narrator that he get some lunch and then the two men take a train car to Glengariff where they can spend the afternoon.

The narrator gets his lunch and the two men set out. When they reach the seaside town of Glengariff, they find the beach area crowded with people enjoying picnics. The two men settle down to their lunches and afterward, Hooper begins to look through some files he has brought along while the narrator decides to nap. He is nearly asleep when he becomes aware of the sound of footsteps outside the car. Hooper surmises that there are mischievous boys outside; the narrator agrees adding that the railway is generally considered to be a refuge. This reminds Hooper that he has a souvenir for the narrator and he reaches into this waistcoat pocket to retrieve it. He is interrupted, however by a voice outside the car, which turns out to be Mr. Pyecroft, an old friend of the narrator's. Introductions are made and then men settle down to talk.

As they sit, Pyecroft pulls a quart bottle of beer from beneath his coat. Pyecroft tells the men that the bottle was a gift from a woman acquaintance. The men have a good-natured argument about the effect their uniforms seem to have on the local women before the conversation turns to the legend of Boy-Niven, a seaman who once lured seven or eight marines into the woods of British Columbia under the pretense that his uncle was making a gift of a farm to the men. Pritchard and Pyecroft were court-martialed for their role in this fiasco because it was thought that they had deserted the military. As they recount the story for Hooper, Pritchard seems to become angry all over again at the thought of having been so severely misled. Soon, however the conversation turns to other people who have passed through their lives and each of the men gave whatever information they had regarding their former comrades' whereabouts, including news of some who have deserted their ships. As the conversation turns to the subject of one man who deserted after sixteen years of service, Pyecroft makes reference to another man who had deserted a mere eighteen months shy of his pension.

As they begin to discuss this man more specifically, Pritchard becomes suspicious that perhaps Hooper is some sort of agent responsible for finding and bringing in deserters, and it takes the other two men several minutes to convince him this is not the case. In an effort to resume the conversation on more friendly terms, the narrator asks why the man in question is referred to as "Click." He is told that the man had lost some teeth in an accident involving ammunition and because the replacement teeth were not firmly fastened in place, they made a pronounced clicking sound whenever the man spoke.

Hooper is intrigued and, with his hand still in his waistcoat-pocket, he asks if the man had any distinguishing tattoos. Pritchard again becomes suspicious of Hooper's questions and begins to act rudely. Pyecroft tells his friend he is behaving badly and orders him to apologize to Hooper and the narrator.

When they resume talking about the man, who by this time is identified as Vickery, it becomes quickly understood that he had deserted because of a woman. When Pyecroft mentions the woman was a hotel-keeper near Auckland, Pritchard asks if it was Mrs. Bathurst. When it is confirmed that the woman was indeed Mrs. Bathurst, Pritchard reminds the men that Vickery was married and had a fifteen year-old daughter, a comment that causes one of the men to comment that for many men, the fact they are married doesn't make a difference when it comes to extra-marital affairs.

In response to the narrator's request for more information regarding Mrs. Bathurst, Pyecroft replies that she was a widow who never remarried. Always dressed in black silk, she kept a hotel that the seamen frequented. She was generous almost to a fault and quite trusting. She was notorious for renting rooms to sailors on credit and according to Pritchard; she once marked four bottles of a particular beer for him so that he could be assured they would still be there the next time he visited. When Pritchard returned five years later, the beer was waiting for him.

To illustrate his point, Pyecroft asks Pritchard if he can recall more than a few of the women he had been intimate with. Pritchard says he cannot, but goes on to say that although he has only been able to get to Auckland three times in the last ten years, he can vividly remember Mrs. Bathurst. Pyecroft says he has had the same experience and he suspects that Vickery had likewise found himself under Mrs. Bathurst's "spell" as well.

When the narrator asks how often Vickery had managed to be with Mrs. Bathurst, Pyecroft replies that he does not know; he had just met Vickery on his most recent voyage aboard the *Hierophant* however, based on the way in which Vickery spoke about the woman, he suspects that there was a fairly significant relationship between the two.

In what appears to be an attempt at changing the subject, Pyecroft asks Hooper if he had been in Cape Town the previous December and had the opportunity to attend Phyllis's Circus. When Hooper responds that he was further north in December, it is clear that he is somewhat annoyed at the fact that the conversation has shifted gears. Nonetheless, Pyecroft pushes on and explains that there were movies shown that depicted scenes from England. Hooper impatiently replies that he has seen all of the movies. Pyecroft continues his tale and says that while in Cape Town, he was out with some friends when he encountered Vickery. When Vickery invited Pyecroft to join him at the cinema, Pyecroft eagerly abandoned his friends and in anticipation of a night of heavy drinking, he joins Vickery. Pyecroft is soon disappointed, however, when Vickery tells him he wants to remain sober for the time being. Pyecroft recalls seeing Vickery's face and being made somewhat anxious by the expression he saw.

When the movie begins, Vickery tells Pritchard to let him know if he sees anything interesting. It doesn't take long for Pritchard to realize that he has become thoroughly engrossed in the show. As he watches a scene in which a train arrives at a station, he is surprised to see Mrs. Bathurst among the passengers who disembark from the train. He obviously isn't the only one who recognizes the woman for he hears one of his friends exclaim, "There's Mrs. B!" from the rear of the theater. Vickery then asks Pyecroft if he believes the woman in the film is Mrs. Bathurst. When Pyecroft says that yes, he believes it is, Vickery asks him to return with him to the theater the next night. Then looking at his watch, he comments that it will be nearly twenty-four hours before he will see Mrs. Bathurst again.

The two men leave the theater and eventually find themselves in a tavern where they proceed to drink quite heavily. The entire time they are there (approximately 3 and one-half hours), the only thing Vickery says is "Let's have another." This scene is repeated on each of the next five evenings. As Hooper listens to this tale, his hand is still near his waistcoat pocket.

Pyecroft tells the men that he still isn't sure what to make of the entire ordeal, but he does believe that Vickery is a "dumb lunatic." He recalls that when he once asked Vickery what he thought Mrs. Bathurst might be doing in England, Vickery replied that he is sure she is looking for him, before asking Pyecroft to confine his conversation to the "drinks set before you." Vickery assures Pyecroft that if he is made angry, he will almost certainly be driven to murder. Given this revelation, Pyecroft begins to wonder what will happen when the movies leave town and Vickery no longer has he daily "visit" with Mrs. Bathurst.

A short time later, Pyecroft learns that Vickery has been summoned to the ship's captain's office. Pyecroft learns from one of the ship's officers that there is going to be a hanging. However, when several days go by and there is no corpse, it was generally thought that the officer was wrong. Pyecroft eventually learns that Vickery has been sent on an assignment to Worcester to retrieve some naval ammunition and that he is going alone. Pyecroft accompanies Vickery ashore and, before they part company, Vickery tells him that the same movie will be showing in Worcester and so he will once again be able to see Mrs. Bathurst. When Pyecroft indicates that he doesn't want to know anymore about it, Vickery tells him that he is not a murder and his wife died during childbirth. The two men part ways.

Pyecroft says he does not know if Vickery ever went to the show. The last he had heard, Vickery showed up at the appointed place and oversaw the ammunition being placed on the trucks as instructed. He then disappeared, eighteen months short of being eligible to receive his pension.

The men wonder for a few minutes what caused Vickery to desert this ship and discuss whether or not Mrs. Bathurst had anything to do with his decision. Pyecroft says he has spent a great deal of time wondering about the entire matter and has not been able to make sense of it; but every time he does think about it, he can almost hear the clicking of Vickery's teeth. The mention of the teeth causes Hooper to put his hand in his

waistcoat pocket one more time. He tells Pritchard and Pyecroft that right before they arrived, he was about to ask the narrator if they are familiar with the village of Wankies. He tells the men that he was recently in the village to relieve another inspector. When he arrived, the inspector told him to keep an eye out for some tramps that had been seen in the area. Hooper says he eventually spotted them a few miles away, but they were dead, apparently the victims of a lightening strike. He said one of the men had false teeth and tattoos of a crown, an anchor and the initials M.V. Pyecroft confirms he had seen these tattoos in the past.

Hooper tells the men that he buried Vickery and starts to tell them that he kept something, but doesn't finish his thought. As the men silently contemplate all that they have just heard, Pyecroft decides that after having endured Vickery for those five consecutive nights, he is glad he is now dead.

Analysis

One of the first things that are apparent about this story is the author's use of the local dialect. While this makes the story more difficult to read and understand (it may take several readings in order for it to be adequately understood), it serves to give the reader a good understanding of the environment and the traits of the principal characters. For instance, if read aloud, the language used by Pritchard and Pyecroft is heavily accented, indicating that they are of English descent. The language of Hooper and the narrator, on the other hand, is more straightforward and less difficult to read. It is also interesting that< although the story is told through the narrator's point of view, we do not hear from the narrator for a significant portion of the story, rather, the majority of the narrative comes from Pyecroft's perspective. Given the story's ambiguous outcome, it is possible then that Kipling purposely used the local dialect with Pyecroft's character to help perpetuate the story's mysterious tone.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of this story is its ambiguity. Indeed, by the time the story ends, a number of questions remain largely unanswered: What was the extent of the relationship between Mrs. Bathurst and Vickery? What was in Hooper's pocket?; Why did Vickery desert the military when he was so close to being able to receive his pension?; Was Mrs. Bathurst the woman in the movie? Because Kipling provides us with so few details, it is left up to the reader to piece together the small pieces of information that are provided.

Of all these questions, the one that seems to be easiest to answer is the one regarding Mrs. Bathurst's appearance in the movie. Given the fact that others in the theater recognize her as well, we can safely assume that it was her. What we don't know is why she was in London.

The relationship between Vickery and Mrs. Bathurst is never really clearly defined. While the men assume that Vickery is married, which would make their relationship adulterous, they agree that this would not have prevented him - or many other men - from having an affair. Even so, we can not even be entirely certain that the two even

met - we are hearing this tale from Pyecroft's point of view. Based on some of the things we learn about Pyecroft as the story unfolds; we begin to realize that he is not particularly astute. While Pyecroft acknowledges that he and Vickery spoke of Mrs. Bathurst once or twice, he never elaborates. As a result, we are left to wonder if Vickery's infatuation with Mrs. Bathurst is the result of his unrequited affections, if they had a long-term relationship, or something in between.

While we never learn what is in Hooper's pocket, we can assume that it is likely the Vickery's teeth. Considering we learn that little is left of Vickery after he is stricken, it seems reasonable that his teeth would be about the only thing that would withstand the lightening strike. This idea is supported by the fact that when Hooper finally withdraws his empty hand from his pocket, he begins to say that he kept something, but then, realizing that Vickery was a friend to Pyecroft and Pritchard, he decides to not continue.

Vickery's reasons for deserting the military are likewise unclear. While it is likely that his disappearance had something to do with Mrs. Bathurst, there is no clear connection. We assume that he is running away from something, but are unable to identify precisely what. There is one hint provided near the end of the story when Vickery proclaims that he is not a murderer because his lawful wife died during childbirth six weeks after he sailed. This causes us to wonder if Vickery is suspected of killing his wife so that he could legally and morally be with Mrs. Bathurst. This statement could, however, be interpreted as an indication that perhaps Mrs. Bathurst took her own life when she found that Vickery was married and had a wife who was about to give birth. Another possibility is that Vickery fathered a child with Mrs. Bathurst and then, frightened that he may revealed as an adulterer, he abandoned her. This would explain his belief that Mrs. Bathurst is looking for him in the movie scene. Finally, it is possible that the person who was with Vickery at the time of his death was Mrs. Bathurst.

When Hooper describes the scene in which he found Vickery's charred remains, he refers to Vickery's companion as his "mate," an ambiguous description that gives us no indication as to the person's gender. This explanation becomes even more plausible when we remember that Vickery was allowed to travel alone, and he was sent on this assignment only after a very long, private meeting with the ship's commander. Further, because Vickery's mood was characterized as quite happy after he emerged from this meeting, we can reason that perhaps he knew that he would soon be reunited with Mrs. Bathurst. Seen in this light, Vickery's proclamation that he is not a murderer can be an attempt on his part to make sure others know that he is morally and legally free to be with Mrs. Bathurst.

As the story ends, we are really no closer to answering most of these questions. Obviously, this is Kipling's intent and so rather than being satisfied that the story has come to some sort of conclusion, we are left to wonder just what that conclusion is.

Characters

Mrs. Bathurst

Mrs. Bathurst is one of the central characters in the story. She is the subject of a story told by Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard to Mr. Hooper and the narrator. Her name does not appear until almost midway through the story. She is the manager of a hotel and restaurant in Auckland, New Zealand, where she earned a reputation for beneficence toward sailors like Pritchard and Pyecroft. She is the main subject of fascination, however, for Mr. Vickery ("Click"), who (again, as told through the story of Pritchard and Pyecroft) has an affair with her and deserts his ship when he sees her a fleeting image of her in a movie.

Click

See Mr. Vickery

Mr. Hooper

Mr. Hooper is an inspector for the South African railway who meets the narrator in Simon's. Mr. Hooper fingers an unknown object in his pocket throughout the story; some readers have believed it to be the false teeth of Mr. Vickery, whose charred corpse he discovered along the railway line.

Narrator

Little is known about the narrator except that he is a friend of Mr. Hooper and Mr. Pyecroft. He acts as a peacemaker between Pritchard and Mr. Hooper.

Pritchard

Pritchard is the immature friend of Mr. Pyecroft who interjects small details into the story of Mrs. Bathurst, based on personal contact with her in Auckland. He is suspicious by nature.

Mr. Pyecroft

Mr. Pyecroft tells the story about Mr. Vickery and his relationship with Mrs. Bathurst. He and his companion, Sergeant Pritchard, surprise Mr. Hooper and the narrator in Glengariff Bay. Mr. Pyecroft is a talkative man with much sailing experience who often

uses malapropisms in the telling of elaborate tales. He is the last one to have seen Mr. Vickery.

Mr. Vickery

Like Mrs. Bathurst, Mr. Vickery is a character who never appears in person; instead, he is the central character of the story told by Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard. Pyecroft describes Vickery as a "superior man," reticent and a bit creepy. Mr. Vickery has earned the nickname "Click" because of four false teeth that rattle in his mouth. Vickery's infatuation with the movie image of Mrs. Bathurst, and his subsequent search for her, indicates an obsessive single-mindedness in his disposition.

Themes

Art and Experience

"Mrs. Bathurst" explores, among other things, the relationship between experience and its artistic representation through language. The central story of the tale is told second-hand, by Mr. Pyecroft, with help from Sergeant Pritchard. Readers must evaluate the relative positions of all of the narrators in the story in order to understand that each of their perspectives on the story is only one of many. Mr. Pyecroft addresses this issue when he says, "I used to think seein' and hearin' was the only regulation aids to ascertainin' facts, but as we get older, we get more accomodatin.'" In other words, he realizes that his narrative, like many, relies on lived experience reconstructed through language, and that there is always room for discrepancy between what actually happened and how events are later remembered.

Moreover, since details of the central plot in "Mrs. Bathurst" are provided by three of the four characters who are actually present in the story Mr. Hooper, Mr. Pyecroft, and Sergeant Pritchard the plot becomes the product of a collective effort, one which does not always come together seamlessly to form a coherent whole. The identity of the two corpses found by Mr. Hooper, for instance, is left uncertain and ambiguous, as is the actual outcome of the story of Mr. Vickery's and Mrs. Bathurst's affair.

Appearances and Reality

Closely related to the theme of art and experience in the story is that of appearance vs. reality. Early on in the story, for instance, a local girl throws a Bass beer over a wall to Sergeant Pritchard because she mistakes him for someone else. Mr. Pyecroft jokes that, "Its the uniform that fetches 'em, an' they fetch it," emphasizing the importance of Pritchard's appearance.

The story's conclusion also reinforces the theme of appearances and reality, as Mr. Hooper tells the other three men how he has recently discovered the charred corpses of two tramps, and how one of the corpses had false teeth. This same corpse had tattoos on his arms and chest, which Mr. Pyecroft verifies were on the body of Mr. Vickery. Though this would seem to confirm that the corpse was that of Mr. Vickery, readers are by no means certain that it is.

Love and Passion

Mr. Vickery's and Mrs. Bathurst's affair is the central subject of the narrative. The love and passion that they share is not conventional, however, since Mr. Vickery is already married. Mr. Vickery believes that Mrs. Bathurst has come to search him out in England when he sees her image on a movie screen in Cape Town, South Africa.

Less is known about Mrs. Bathurst's behavior and motivations since most of the story concerns Mr. Pyecroft's knowledge of Mr. Vickery. Some critics view Mr. Vickery's desertion of his ship, and his search for Mrs. Bathurst (or at least her image), as a sign of his undying love for her. Others perceive his actions as evidence of a guilty conscience or tormented soul, perhaps based on his cryptic admonition to Mr. Pyecroft that "I am not a murderer, because my lawful wife died in childbed six weeks after I came out." Nevertheless, there is clearly more to the relationship between Mr. Vickery and Mrs. Bathurst than is revealed by Mr. Pyecroft's narrative.

Fate and Chance

"Mrs. Bathurst" raises many important questions about fate and chance. Accidents and coincidence pervade the story, from the chance encounter of the narrator and Mr. Hooper, to the random image of Mrs. Bathurst that captures the fascination of Mr. Vickery. Other coincidences include the meeting of the narrator and Mr. Hooper by Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard, who happen to be on the same deserted bay in South Africa at the same time, as well as Mr. Hooper's accidental discovery of the charred corpse of Mr. Vickery. These episodes seem random and accidental, but become part of a larger order when combined together. The abundant mistakes and coincidences in the story make the reader question the role of fate in literature and life.

Alienation

It is possible to talk about the theme of alienation in relation to "Mrs. Bathurst" from a number of perspectives. To begin with, the story takes place on a single brake-car that is resting on an isolated beach in South Africa, making the physical setting of the story difficult to locate. Moreover, all four of the men who converse are in some way absent from the place they should be□Mr. Hooper must repair a broken railway car, the narrator has missed his rendezvous with the ship he is supposed to visit, and Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard are either deserters from their ship or waiting for it to be repaired.

Furthermore, Mr. Vickery and Mrs. Bathurst are separated, yet engaged in the futile but passionate pursuit of one another. The cinematic image of Mrs. Bathurst, which Mr. Vickery watches in Cape Town, is an important symbol of this alienation, since the image itself must stand in for Mrs. Bathurst. In broader terms, Kipling's story points to the alienation not only of a society that is recovering from war, but also to that of the modern world in general, where larger urban populations and advances in technology tend to alienate individuals from various social structures.

Style

Setting

"Mrs. Bathurst" is set in an isolated railway car on a beach in Glengariff Bay, South Africa, where the narrator has gone after missing his ship. It is somewhat surprising, then, that Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard stumble onto the brake-car by accident and proceed to tell the story of Mrs. Bathurst and Mr. Vickery to the narrator and Mr. Hooper. It is relevant that the story takes place near the ocean, since it revolves around sailing and sailors. Moreover, the story takes place immediately after the Boer War (1899-1902) and the circumstances of this war provide a constant subtext to the story (such as when Vickery goes to collect ammunition for the Navy). The Boer War was a conflict between the Dutch colonists in South Africa and the countries of the British Commonwealth, including England and Australia.

Structure Setting

The story of "Mrs. Bathurst" is told by a firstperson narrator, but mostly contains dialogue between the four principal characters. For this reason, there is little narrative description in the story that is not part of a conversation. Moreover, the conversation that the narrator (and, in turn, the reader) overhears is sometimes in dialect, particularly those portions spoken by Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard. The effect of this is to make their phrases more realistic when read aloud, and also more difficult to understand.

The central structure of the narrative involves a story within the story, since the tale of Mrs. Bathurst and Mr. Vickery is told by two characters other than the narrator. There are two time frames in the story as well□that of the present tense in which the narrator meets up with three other characters in Glengariff Bay, South Africa, and that of the past tense, in which the love affair between Mrs. Bathurst and Mr. Vickery takes place.

Point of View

The reader is told the story via the unnamed narrator. Yet, the central or core story of the relationship between Mr. Vickery and Mrs. Bathurst is revealed through the narration of Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard. Therefore, the reader's point of view about the central narrative is filtered through two other narratives□that of Mr. Pyecroft and that of the narrator himself, who speaks in the first person. The various layers of narration in the story account for its complexity and the story's indeterminate, or fragmentary, style.

Symbolism

There are few traditional symbols in the story, since most of "Mrs. Bathurst" consists of dialogue. Moreover, the symbols that might be interpreted in the story seem to be not fully formed. The object in Mr. Hooper's pocket, for instance, which might be the set of false teeth that he has taken from the burnt corpse of Mr. Vickery, never appear. The image of Mrs. Bathurst on the movie screen is another image that is not fully materialized, since a movie image stands in for the real person, and because Mrs. Bathurst is possibly already dead at the time Mr. Vickery and Mr. Pyecroft observe her image at the cinema in Cape Town.

Historical Context

Science and Technology

The end of the nineteenth century brought many developments in science and technology that had a direct impact on the everyday lives of millions of people in Europe and America. The telegraph, photograph, and cinema were all products of the time. These inventions and others changed in fundamental ways how people communicated with each another, especially in urban centers. The rise of photography and cinema, in particular, produced new art forms that were capable of communicating the themes usually addressed by literature in less time and to a wider audience than ever before.

Novelists and painters reacted in varying ways to the development of these new media. Kipling's "Mrs. Bathurst" includes a scene in which the image of Mrs. Bathurst is projected onto a movie screen in Cape Town. The effect of this image on Mr. Vickery is one of the central episodes of the story, since it leads him to desert his ship in pursuit of the object of his desire. The effect of Kipling's story can be related to the movie itself, since both are primarily composed of dialogue and because the reader of Kipling, like a cinema viewer, is thrust into the midst of the scene, without abundant narrative background, and must make sense of the story largely by overhearing the dialogue of others. The story itself is constructed with the same unconnectedness, among its parts, as a newsreel.

Colonialism

Though you would be hard pressed to find concrete evidence of the colonization of South Africa in Kipling's South Africa, it is nevertheless a constant subtext of the story. The Dutch first settled the land that later became known as South Africa, but their claims were challenged by (among others) the British Commonwealth, giving rise in part to the Boer War. The British Navy was the preeminent maritime power in the nineteenth century. The mass colonization of Africa and other colonies could not have been achieved without it. When Mr. Hooper suspects the Malay boys of making noise around the railway car, the reader gets a glimpse of the natives of the colony, but one of very few. In general, one might argue that Kipling has successfully suppressed the colonial context of his story. Widely regarded as a supporter of British imperialism, Kipling's deliberate omission of colonial issues in "Mrs. Bathurst" must be balanced with such works as *Kim*, where these issues are brought more clearly into focus.

Modernism

Rudyard Kipling's fiction has been associated with the modernist movement in literature. Though there is no single modernist creed that unites all of the authors associated with the movement, many of the writers were reacting both to social and literary changes, in particular the urbanization and social decay of the time. Modernism was considered a

radical break with the past, especially with what authors like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound saw as a late nineteenth-century poetic style that needed new blood.

Critical Overview

By 1889, Rudyard Kipling was considered as one of the leading writers of his day. The publication of "Mrs. Bathurst" (1904) was an important event in his career. Favorable critical response to the story reinforced his reputation as a writer of the highest order, a designation that was acknowledged by the European intellectual community with the Nobel Prize in 1907. Numerous critics deem "Mrs. Bathurst" as one of the finest examples of Kipling's work as a short-story writer. For example, Walter Allen selected the story as an example of the very best literature, and placed Kipling near the top of the pantheon of short-story writers in English. T. S. Eliot praised Kipling's "pagan vision" in the introduction to a volume of Kipling's poetry, entitled the *Choice of Kipling's Verse*.

Not all of the reaction was favorable, however. Angus Wilson and Kingsley Amis regarded "Mrs. Bathurst" as pretentious. In more recent years, Norman Page has noted the story's "obscure power" over the reader.

"Mrs. Bathurst" was first published with ten other short stories in a collection entitled *Traffics and Discoveries*. It shares with many of the stories in the compilation (e.g. "Wireless") a reliance on personal experience. Kipling made many visits to South Africa during the Boer War, and drew from this experience when he wrote his stories.

"Mrs. Bathurst" features extensive use of dialect as well as a framing device and a series of narrators; these elements became trademarks of his short fiction. Kipling was known as an artist who used the utmost economy in his writing and some critics have observed that "Mrs. Bathurst" is almost a parody of concision. So much is left out of the story that what remains has to possess an enormous amount of narrative weight in order for the tale to succeed. It is a little ironic that Kipling earned his reputation as a novelist for concealing as much as possible from his readers.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Mercy is a freelance writer and a doctoral candidate at the University of California-Berkeley. In the following essay, he suggests that the key to understanding Kipling's "Mrs. Bathurst" lies in its structure.

If you have come away from "Mrs. Bathurst" more than a little confused and frustrated by its complexity, then rest assured that you are neither the first nor the last to do so. Since its growing popularity as one of Kipling's most complex stories, "Mrs. Bathurst" has received a barrage of critical response, most of which takes for granted that the story is at once "obscure and puzzling," filled with "misinformation," "uncrackable," and, as though Kipling were pleased by his audience's frustrations, "teasingly ambiguous."

In fact, even those most familiar with Kipling's art have chosen to summarize "Mrs. Bathurst" before venturing to interpret its meaning, as though describing "what happens" is, in itself, an interpretive feat. Those who have refused to search out some meaning in the story have done so on the grounds that it is cryptic to the point of incomprehensibility, or even downright pretentious. For one scholar, the problem of the story's meaning "will remain unanswered" because it "probably never had much meaning."

One possible explanation for the difficulty we find in "Mrs. Bathurst" may have to do with Kipling's own preoccupation with questions of literary *construction*. In the autobiography printed after his death, Kipling writes of his fiction: "I made my own experiments in the weights, colours, perfumes and attributes of words in relation to other words, either as read aloud so that they may hold the ear, or scattered over the page, drew the eye" (*Something of Myself*).

With Kipling, we have the image of one who combines words the way a chemist combines chemicals, seeking some new reaction that might change the manner in which we experience the world through language. Elsewhere, in a letter to a young reader, Kipling offers this interesting advice: "read and reread [books] until you pass from mere reading to criticism and begin to see how they are put together and what means the author uses to produce certain effects." It behooves the reader to return to the story time and time again□not despite its complexities, but *because* of them.

Seeing how the story is "put together" is, perhaps, most central to understanding "Mrs. Bathurst." For it is precisely the story's construction, its manner of unfolding, that so often baffles readers. Take, for instance the insertion of what appears to be a series of *non sequiturs* into the story, ranging from the short tale of Boy Niven's circuitous misguidance, to the anecdote of how Pritchard receives a beer from a woman who apparently has *mistaken* him for someone else.

We might also note that the story begins with a mistake, as the narrator tells us: "The day I chose to visit HMS Peridot in Simon's Bay was the day that the Admiral had chosen to send her up the coast. She was just steaming out to sea as my train came

in. . . ." From the very start, the story is fraught with mistimings, misrecognitions, disruptions, and unexpected detail; it is constructed like a building with hidden hallways and unfinished staircases. Precisely because Kipling fills lines with so much detail, with vivid "weights, colours, perfumes and attributes," we find ourselves confused, feeling more ignorant than informed. But only by acknowledging this as part of the story's strategy□this feeling of disorientation that we immediately get□can we really understand Kipling's narrative method and the "means the author uses to produce certain effects."

As a result of film's verisimilitude, it is easy for viewers, particularly those who have never confronted such technology, to confuse the "thing itself" with the representation of the picture on the screen; and this seems to be Vickery's and Pyecroft's confusion. "Why, it's the woman herself," says Pyecroft to Vickery, when he sees Mrs. Bathurst exit the train.

Of course, it's not the woman herself at all. To think that, is to mistake representation for reality, and potentially to go mad in the process, much as Vickery does. He cannot sort through the spatial tricks that appear on the "big magic lantern sheet" of the cinema; for example, that the representation of Mrs. Bathurst appears on a screen in Cape Town despite the fact that she is getting off a train in London's Paddington station. This confuses Vickery enough to make him look into bars every three minutes, expecting to see her. To the two men, when the image of Mrs. Bathurst passes the camera it appears as though she "melt[s] out of the picture" and phantasmically disappears, "like a shadow jumpin' over a candle." There is something haunting about the image on the screen. Nor can Vickery understand the temporal tricks played by film. Some critics have suggested that, at the time when Vickery and Pyecroft are watching Mrs. Bathurst on the screen, she is dead. Such an argument helps to explain why Vickery is so disturbed by her repeated "arrival" in London. "She's lookin' for me," he says, "stopping dead under a lamp."

At this point, we might suggest that the experience of reading "Mrs. Bathurst" is confusing to us in similar ways, and that our inability to piece together all of the details is a kind of interpretative madness. As readers, we are given no explanation of the narrator's business with the ship at the beginning of the story; we only know that, like Vickery, he wants to be where he is not. We never even learn the narrator's name or history. Likewise, Mr. Pyecroft and Sergeant Pritchard appear in the story as if out of nowhere, phantasmically to the narrator who has drifted off into a beer-induced sleep. Moreover, the abundance of unfinished sentences and, as I have already mentioned, non sequiturs make the story tough to visualize. In regard to many of the story's episodes, we as readers might say with Mr. Hooper, "I don't see . . . somehow." The information on the page does not conform easily to a mental picture in our imaginations.

Finally, we might ask why Kipling would construct a story that mimics, by its temporal and spatial shifts and its confusing narrative, the effects of the cinema. What is there for Kipling to gain by making his readers into disorientated viewers, who resemble Vickery in this regard and who must return again and again to the story, obsessed to find answers to many questions? In one sense, Kipling anticipates modernist writers who

defamiliarize their narrative styles□make them obscure and cryptic□ in order to emphasize the distance between narrative and reality.

One problem that faced many modernists was the public's willingness to collapse the boundaries separating artistic representation from reality. The film, the most "realistic" of new modes of representation, amplified this problem by glorifying its ability to mimic reality and to make representations appear, as Pyecroft says, "alive an' movin'." Some critics have even suggested that "Mrs. Bathurst" exemplifies literary realism, that the dialogue and the anecdotes in the story are strange precisely because they so closely resemble reality. Certainly, when four men sit in a circle and reminisce over beer, the conversation often takes strange, incomprehensible turns.

But this should not rule out the opposite assessment, namely that Kipling is reacting against literary realism by showing the dangers of assuming that representations are reality. "Mrs. Bathurst" moves away from clearly visible reality. We never know what happens to Vickery, because Hooper never pulls from his pocket the missing clue, which we assume he has. And we never see the title character of the story with clear eyes. What does she really look like? Where has she gone? In the end, it is left for our imaginations, not for our eyes to discern. "Yes," we remember Pyecroft saying, "I used to think seein' and hearin' was the only regulation aids to ascertainin' facts, but as we get older we get more accommodatin'."

Source: Andrew Mercy,"The Effect of 'Mrs. Bathurst' on the Reader," for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Lodge discusses the themes of love, death, and guilt in Kipling's "Mrs. Bathurst."

That is what Mrs Bathurst does when she appears on the screen: 'She walked on and on till she melted out of the picture.' And it is, metaphorically speaking, what Vickery does: he steps out of the frame of Pyecroft's perception at Simonstown station.

In this remarkable passage Kipling manages vividly to convey the disconcerting effect of the cinematic image□at once lifelike and insubstantial□ when it was still a novelty, and to turn this experience into a poignant symbol of both the pain of disappointed desire and the mystery of human motivation. To Vickery, watching the newsreel, Mrs Bathurst is both present and absent, near and far. He can see her, but she, peering out of the screen with her 'blindish look,' cannot see him. From her expression, Pyecroft infers that she is looking for someone, and Vickery affirms that she is looking for him. This motif of interpreting someone's intentions from their countenance is repeated when Pyecroft and the cox, Lamson, scrutinise the captain's expressions after the latter's interview with Vickery. 'Mrs Bathurst' is, indeed, in one sense a story about the difficulty of interpretation, and Pyecroft challenges us as well as the other characters in the brake-van when he concludes his account of Vickery's strange behaviour with the question, 'How do you read it off?'.

How do we read it off? There is no difficulty in saying what 'Mrs Bathurst,' in a general sense, is about: it is about the tragic and destructive consequences that may ensue when a man becomes infatuated with a woman who, though morally blameless, is so powerfully attractive to the man that he will abandon all scruples, honour and material security on her account. Like other tales of Kipling, this one suggests that very ordinary humble people may enact tragedy. That Vickery's last recorded words are Hamlet's, 'The rest is silence,' makes this point. So does Vickery's remark to Pyecroft, 'What'ave you to complain of?□you've only 'ad to watch. I'mit,' irresistibly recalling Faustus's words, 'Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.' So does the densely obscure epigraph to the story□a fragment of an old play, in actuality written by Kipling himself, describing the death of a groom or clown which, it is said, would have excited more attention if it had been suffered by a prince.

'Mrs Bathurst' is a tragedy of love and death, but its details are obscure and ambiguous. It seems safe to infer that Mrs. Bathurst and Vickery were lovers, that he deceived her about the fact that he was married, that she came to England with the intention of meeting him. What we cannot ascertain is whether Vickery discovered that she came to England only when he saw the newsreel, or whether, after the moment recorded on the newsreel, they actually did meet in England. If the latter is the case, she would, presumably, have discovered that he was married, and, given her character, have broken off their relationship□perhaps, it has even been suggested, have died as a result of the shock, so that her apparition on the screen affects Vickery as a kind of ghost, 'looking for him' in an accusing, haunting fashion. If the former is the case, then Vickery

is presuming that she will have found out that he was married, either before or after his wife died in childbirth. (Could the shock of the revelation have brought on the wife's death?)

The indeterminacy of the story is partly due to the indeterminacy of its chronology. It would seem that Vickery and Pyecroft saw the newsreel in December 1902, since we are told that it was just before Christmas, and shortly afterwards Vickery is sent to recover some ammunition 'left after the war in Bloemfontein Fort.' The Boer War ended in May 1902. The newsreel, however, seems to have been filmed while the war was still going on, since it includes a shot of a troopship 'goin' to the war.' We don't know when Vickery left England□whether it was before or after Mrs Bathurst discovered he was married. Perhaps his ship was steaming out to sea as her train was coming into Paddington station. But when he sees her on the screen, he must know, or have inferred, that there is no possibility of their union, either because she is dead or because of an irreparable breach between them. Otherwise, why should he desert, within a few months of his pensioned retirement, when he is free to marry her because of the death of his wife? Evidently Vickery is harrowed by guilt in relation to Mrs Bathurst, and feels he is on the verge of going mad and murdering someone, and persuades his captain to connive at his desertion by sending him up country, alone. He may, of course, be quite mistaken about Mrs Bathurst's reaction. The epigraph hints at this: 'She that damned him to death knew not that she did it, or would have died ere she had done it. For she loved him.'

It has been suggested by some readers that Vickery and Mrs Bathurst were united□that the mysterious figure found dead beside Vickery by Hooper is Mrs Bathurst. It is true that Pritchard seems to leap to this conclusion, covering 'his face with his hands for a moment, like a child shutting out an ugliness. "And to think of her at Hauraki!" he murmured,' and Hooper's description of the second figure as Vickery's 'mate' is nicely ambiguous as to sex. But this must be one last false clue put in by the implied author to tease the reader. There is no logical reason why Vickery and Mrs Bathurst should have met in this way and lived like tramps. It is in character for Vickery to have picked up some companion in his wanderings, as he picked up Pyecroft in Cape Town; and I am inclined to agree with Elliott L. Gilbert that this second corpse is introduced to indicate by its crouching posture that Vickery invited the fatal lightning stroke by standing upright beside the rail in the storm [Elliot L. Gilbert, *The Good Kipling: Studies in the Short Story,* 1972]. Thus his death is a kind of *liebestod,* comparable to Hamlet's leap in Ophelia's grave and subsequent expiatory death. The rest is silence.

I suggested earlier that there is in 'Mrs Bathurst,' as well as a discourse about the story, a story of the discourse□a suspense story in which the most obvious narrative question raised is, *What will Hooper produce from his waistcoat pocket?* In the classic detective story we should expect the answer to this question to coincide with the mystery in the core story. In 'Mrs Bathurst' this coincidence both does and does not occur. We have every reason to believe that Hooper has in his pocket the false teeth which constitute incontrovertible evidence that the corpse in the teak forest was in fact Vickery's, and it is entirely natural that he should refrain from producing the gruesome relic out of respect for the feelings of Vickery's friends. There is no logical ground to doubt this

testimony□Pyecroft has already con- firmed the complementary evidence of the tattoo. Yet on the symbolic level the long-delayed gesture of Hooper's bringing his hand away from his waistcoat pocket□empty, can only have the effect of generating doubt and uncertainty in the reader's mind, and emphasising the indeterminacy of the text.

Source: David Lodge, "'Mrs. Bathurst': Indeterminacy in Motion," in *Kipling Considered*, edited by Phillip Mallett, The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1989, pp. 71-84.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Gilbert examines stylistic aspects of Kipling's "Mrs. Bathurst," asserting that the story's unorthodox narrative structure underscores the themes of chance and accident.

It would be useful for us, at this point, to consider what it is that happens in "Mrs. Bathurst." A warrant officer named Vickery, within eighteen months of his pension, has deserted his duty under peculiar circumstances in the back country of South Africa. Four men gather by chance in a railroad car and after some rambling discussion undertake to piece together Vickery's story from the fragments that each of them has. It seems that Vickery was a devoted family man until the day he met and fell in love with the fascinating Mrs. Bathurst, a widow who ran a small hotel for sailors in New Zealand. Many sailors, among them married ones, have casual affairs with women□Pyecroft and Pritchard have had more than they can remember□but Vickery, described somewhat ironically as a superior man, has apparently fallen deeply under Mrs. Bathurst's irresistible spell. And if the epigraph is to be taken as shedding any light on the story, the phrase "for she loved him" suggests that Mrs. Bathurst was equally serious. At any rate, Pyecroft says, "There must 'ave been a good deal between 'em, to my way o' thinkin'." The epigraph also suggests, in astrological terms, the passionate nature of the relationship, speaking as it does of "Venus, when Vulcan caught her with Mars in the house of stinking Capricorn." (Vulcan is, of course, the classical artificer of lightning bolts.)

What the exact nature of that "good deal between 'em" was we are never certain, and there are those who feel that Kipling was wrong to apply his technique of calculated obscurity, which we shall see was quite valid elsewhere, to the story's central relationship. Information about Vickery and Mrs. Bathurst, the argument runs, is no substitute for a picture of the two of them together, for a confrontation that might have drawn the reader more personally into the story, engaged his sympathy, illuminated Vickery's fate and made it more poignant. It is difficult to defend Kipling and his reticence on this point, but mistaken or not he chose to keep the germinal experience of his story on the very edges of the narrative and to make us struggle to discover even the few facts he thought it necessary for us to have: that Vickery met Mrs. Bathurst, that his life became deeply entangled with hers so that to put his affairs in order would have taken more courage and strength than he had in the world, and that in the end he deserted her.

From that time, apparently, from that failure, dates the beginning of the madness which Pyecroft says must have been going on for years and which characterizes Vickery's last months. But the madness does not reach a crisis until Vickery attends a moving picture show one night in Cape Town and sees Mrs. Bathurst walking out of the screen toward him. We can imagine how he must have felt at the sight. The pictures, we are told, were extremely lifelike□"just like life"□and so realistic that when an engine headed straight at the audience, the ladies in the first row of the theatre jumped. To Vickery, burdened with his guilt, that enormous figure of Mrs. Bathurst bearing "blindishly" down on him must

have been terrifying. Perhaps it made him think of a grim and now far-off domestic scene, the long-feared confrontation of husband, wife and lover to which that detraining had led. Perhaps, on the other hand, there had been no confrontation at all. Kipling does not offer enough information for us to be certain about what happened in London, and we can only conclude that he did not think it important for his readers to know the details; the merest suggestion of disaster was enough. The details he did want his readers to have however, he made extraordinarily graphic: the looming figures on the cinema screen, Vickery's guilty terror, and the chance fact that Mrs. Bathurst, hurrying one day from a railroad car, blundered blindly and unwittingly into range of a camera and thus was made the accidental tool of fortune, damning Vickery to death from thousands of miles away and never knowing she had done it. Hence the irony in Pritchard's repeated, almost panicky requests for assurance, "Say what you please, Pye, but you don't make me believe it was any of 'er fault."

The effect of the motion picture□ironically titled "Home and Friends"□on Vickery is overwhelming and complex. On the one hand it awakens again all of his passionate infatuation for Mrs. Bathurst, drawing him back to the show night after night and leaving him, at the end of each performance, counting the minutes till the next. On the other hand it intensifies his sense of guilt and of inadequacy and contributes further to the disorder that will in the end destroy him. This effect manifests itself physically in Vickery's mad wanderings over Cape Town and in his suicidal urge, once the movie has completed its run and is about to move on, to abandon his duty and follow the film up-country.

Just before he leaves he encounters Pyecroft for the last time and tries to unburden himself a little of his guilt. "I've one thing to say before shakin' 'ands," Pyecroft recalls his words. "Remember that I am not a murderer, because my lawful wife died in childbed six weeks after I came out. That much at least I am clear of." This is a cryptic speech but it comes a little more into focus when we realize that Kipling restored the word "childbed" to the passage when he was preparing the magazine version of the story for book publication [C.A. Bodelsen, *Aspects of Kipling's Art*, 1964]. Vickery clearly feels responsible for his wife's death□elsewhere he speaks of himself as capable of murder□and physically, of course, he is responsible. His real guilt, however, has to do with his sense of having killed her by betraying her with Mrs. Bathurst. Furthermore, there is the sense of having, in his weakness, betrayed Mrs. Bathurst with his wife. This compound treachery leads to such self-loathing that, like the groom in the epigraph, Vickery "must e'en die now to live with myself one day longer." Certainly he desires nothing more, in his weariness with the burden of his own thoughts, than "to throw life from him . . . for a little sleep."

It is in this desperate state of mind that Vickery, having fulfilled his commission at Bloemfontein, drops from sight, embarking on an aimless life as just another one of the many wandering tramps who people the back country. For Vickery is not unique in his inability to confront the world. "Takes 'em at all ages," says Pyecroft of another man who'd left his duty, and "We get heaps of tramps up there since the war," Hooper explains, suggesting that men trained in destruction or shaped by it must use their talents somehow, if only on themselves. Death is what Vickery is seeking, then, as he

drifts from place to place, and he is not long in finding it. One day he and another tramp take refuge beside a railroad track during an electrical storm and there, beneath the teak trees, the two are struck by lightning and are burned to charcoal. It is easily established that one of the two is Vickery, for Hooper happens coincidentally to be there, in his capacity as railroad inspector, to see the tattooed initials M. V. etched in white on the blackened corpse and to take from the crumbling jaws an undamaged dental plate identifiable as Vickery's. In fact, he has the plate in his waistcoat pocket but delicately refrains from showing it out of consideration for Pritchard's obvious distress. Vickery's death is bizarre, certainly, although it is based on a real incident with which Kipling was familiar. But what is really most striking about it is its appropriateness. The man who had been unable to cope with life's disorder achieves, at a stroke, by the accident of lightning, the final disorder of death. When Hooper tries to move the scorched body from its position beside the track it literally crumbles to dust. . . .

In "Mrs. Bathurst," Kipling is dealing with what Beckett calls "the mess," and while we have a right to expect that he will give some kind of shape to his particular vision of life, we are wrong to require that shape to appear necessarily on the narrative level of the story. It is precisely on this level that we should expect, instead, to find all the craziness of life, all its meaninglessness. And a meaningless death may, after all, be thematically significant. Nor is it begging the question to say that "Mrs. Bathurst" has a form imposed upon it by its theme, the persistence of accident, the multiplications of what an existentialist might call the absurd. It is, in fact, just this reiteration of absurdity that is meant to satisfy our craving for form.

Vickery's story ends spectacularly, then, in the back country of South Africa, but some of the questions raised by that story still remain unanswered. Indeed we have still to consider what, for some reason, has always been the most controversial of all the "Mrs. Bathurst" problems, the identity of the second tramp. It was in *The Colophon* that J. Delancey Ferguson, in February, 1932, published an article which took for granted the fact that the tramp found beside Vickery in the teak forest was Mrs. Bathurst herself. Since that time this theory has gained great currency among readers who feel that the story would not be as good if Mrs. Bathurst were not the tramp, who feel that for a satisfying plot it is required that the two central figures be brought together at the close. Kipling was, however, constructing anything but a neat plot here; his central point was, of course, the untidiness of the universe. Mrs. Bathurst is not the conventional heroine of romantic fiction, hurrying to the side of her destitute lover and casting in her lot with his. In the light of the rest of the story this conception is difficult to accept. She is, rather, the unwitting agent of blind chance who dooms Vickery to death without even knowing she has done it. She is far away when the man dies and she knows nothing of what has happened to him, for the fates do not know or care what they have done and they do not die with their victims. It is in just these facts that the great sadness of the story lies, in just this failure of communication.

Pritchard's last speech accents the blind impersonality of Mrs. Bathurst's power.

Pritchard covered his face with his hands for a moment, like a child shutting out an ugliness. 'And to think of her at Hauraki!' he murmured—with 'er 'airribbon on my beer. "Ada," she said to her niece . . . Oh, my Gawd!' . . .

It has been suggested that this outburst could only be Pritchard's horrified reaction to the news that Mrs. Bathurst had been burnt to charcoal in the teak forest. But the speech has a different and perhaps greater significance. Throughout the narrative, Pritchard is presented to us as having himself fallen under Mrs. Bathurst's spell. He lovingly recounts his experience in the hotel bar at Hauraki and at each suggestion that Mrs. Bathurst may have been even remotely responsible for what happened to Vickery, Pritchard protests vehemently—protests almost too much—that the lady could not have had anything to do with it. He seems to have a great stake in her innocence, and all through the story he rejects the truth which is dawning slowly on the others. But the horrible image of Vickery, totally consumed by his passion, finally breaks through his defenses and lets the truth pour in all at once. And the realization overwhelms him—he is, as we have seen, naturally emotional anyway—that Mrs. Bathurst, for all her innocence, has been profoundly involved in Vickery's fate. In his horror, Pritchard recalls what, up to that moment, had always been one of his pleasantest memories, the harmless flirtation in the Hauraki hotel. And understanding now the true nature of that blind, corrosive, impersonal attraction he had felt and himself almost succumbed to, he "covers his face with his hands for a moment, like a child shutting out an ugliness." Outside the office car, waiting for their train, the picnickers sing of romance in conventional, sentimental terms, offering an ironic contrast to Pritchard's belated revelation about the true nature of woman's love.

On a summer afternoon, when the honeysuckle blooms, And all Nature seems at rest, Underneath the bower, 'mid the perfume of the flower, Sat a maiden with the one she loves the best.

It makes a properly bitter conclusion to a story which might equally well have ended with Kurtz's despairing words, "The horror, the horror!"

What happens in "Mrs. Bathurst" is, in the last analysis, a function of the work's structure. All his life Kipling experimented with techniques for drawing readers into the heart of a story, for forcing them, if possible, to participate in the creative process itself. In "Mrs. Bathurst," among other stories, he succeeded in a way which was to damage his popularity and earn him a reputation for trickiness. But it was in just such stories as this that he was most brilliantly the innovator, most startlingly the stylist ahead of his time. Of "Mrs. Bathurst" it can accurately be said that the structure is inextricably bound up with the content. "Mrs. Bathurst" is a story about a group of storytellers who are trying to put together a story and discover its meaning. The story they are constructing is also the one the reader must construct, so that the two activities go on simultaneously. The group of four men gathered in the railroad car to spin yarns is, like the cinema and the episode of Boy Niven, a metaphor for Kipling's vision of life: the irrationality of the universe and man's need to find some order in it. When the four come together, each of them, unknown to the others, has certain disordered fragments of a story, quite meaningless in themselves. (It would be more accurate to say that three of

the members of the group have these fragments. The fourth member, the writer, will one day record the incidents.) They begin to chat idly, in a random way, and slowly, as they talk, a story begins to emerge a little haltingly from the anecdotes and the broken images that each contributes to the general store of information.

Even when all the fragments have been assembled it is plain that significant information is missing. But it is also plain that with just the pieces available to them they have made an important discovery which leaves them silent and disturbed. They have, in fact, discovered the theme of their own story, and though that discovery is never discussed in so many words, the same fragments of information which led the four narrators to their understanding are available to guide the reader to the same conclusions. Indeed, it is because what the storytellers do is so much the model for what Kipling would have his readers do that such emphasis is placed on the "picture-frame" elements in "Mrs. Bathurst." The process of telling the story is as important to an understanding of the whole as the incidents of the story themselves.

In order to tell his story in the way he wanted to, Kipling had to abandon certain of the conventions of prose fiction, most notably the convention of redundancy. . . .

The trouble with conventional dialogue is, in the first place, that people do not really talk in exposition. They say just enough to make themselves understood by the people they are addressing and do not behave as if they were aware of a large, unseen audience requiring to be kept informed. More important, such dialogue stands between the reader and the narrative, rejecting the reader's cooperation by assuring him that he will learn all there is to learn about the story without any effort on his part. In Kipling's dialogue there are few independently meaningful lines; meaning emerges from the total organization of what has gone before and what is to come. Description here is something more than decoration; it is a background against which individually obscure lines take on significance. A gesture will often finish a sentence. This kind of dialogue stretches the mind, requires, in Miss Tompkins' words, "a full participation of the imagination" [J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*, 1959] by readers who, like Pyecroft, recognize that seeing and hearing are not the only regulation aids to ascertaining facts.

There are many examples of this sort of dialogue in "Mrs. Bathurst." One toward the end of the story is representative. Hooper, speaking of his journey up-country on railroad business, says

"I was up there a month ago relievin' a sick inspector, you see. He told me to look out for a couple of tramps in the teak." "Two?" Pyecroft said. "I don't envy that other man if□"

Pyecroft's aposiopesis, out of context, would be meaningless. It is probably meaningless, in any case, to casual readers of the story who have forgotten about Vickery's lunacy and murderous threats and Pyecroft's fear of being alone with the man. Those who have not forgotten are in a position to reconstruct the end of the sentence and so to participate, with the author and the four men in the railroad car, in the creation of the story.

The whole narrative may, in fact, be considered an extended example of aposiopesis. Hooper brings his hand to his waistcoat pocket, presumably to remove Vickery's teeth, but the hand comes away empty. Pyecroft seems on the verge of learning from Vickery's own lips the story of his affair with Mrs. Bathurst, but Vickery breaks off, saying, "The rest is silence." We are left to guess what exactly happened between Vickery and the captain, what Vickery did as a tramp up-country, and who his companion was. The tale of "Mrs. Bathurst," like Kipling's irrational universe, mocks our desire for reasonable explanations. Yet in the end, the theme of the story emerges clearly out of the calculated obscurity of the style. . . .

The symbol in "Mrs. Bathurst" is the storyteller, representing man's eternal quest for the meaning concealed in random events. And the art of the story is aposiopesis, the device of classical rhetoric which seeks, on every level of the narrative, to withhold the ultimate secret. . . .

Source: Elliot L. Gilbert, "The Art of the Complex," in *The Good Kipling: Studies in the Short Story*, Ohio University Press, 1970, pp. 76-117.

Topics for Further Study

Research the history of film from its development in France and America to its popularity before World War I. How did movies affect the lives of the general public?

Identify as many missing details in the story as possible and fill in these gaps, based on evidence from the text, historical context, and what you think may have happened.

In the late nineteenth century, Britain was a major empire, with colonies all over the world. Research the Boer War (1899-1902), using history textbooks or historical books in your library. In what ways did that war affect the British empire?

Research either the realism or modernism movements, using encyclopedias available in your school's library. Write down the major features of the movement you select. Which features are evident in "Mrs. Bathurst" ?

Compare and Contrast

1904: South Africa, initially colonized by the Dutch, is ruled by the British Commonwealth. The British Navy is the preeminent maritime power, and the mass colonization of Africa and other colonies could not have been achieved without it. Native peoples are persecuted and discriminated against, and kept in poverty while colonizers exploited the land's natural resources.

Late 1990s: South Africa is now a republic, free from the colonial influence of England. Apartheid, the legal discrimination against the African people, is now illegal and native groups are achieving opportunity and equal rights under the law.

1904: Realism is a popular literary style, reflecting changing American and European concerns in the twentieth century. Short stories gain widespread popularity as a literary genre.

1990s: Short stories remain popular, and American and European literature are rich with fine examples of the short fiction genre. With the advent of the twenty-first century, realism also remains a viable literary style.

1904: Technological innovations change the way people communicate and live. The telegraph, photograph, and cinema were all products of the time. Photography, radio, and cinema provide a new way for politicians and artists to convey themes and images and offer a myriad of entertainment possibilities for citizens.

1990s: Technology continues to advance, providing faster and more efficient ways to communicate and relay information. The Internet offers access to information and images to anyone with a modem and other necessary equipment. The VCR allows an individual to play movies in the privacy of his or her home; the video camera is a way for individuals to record their own movies. Science continues to refine and improve the way people communicate.

What Do I Read Next?

Rudyard Kipling's novel, *Kim* (1901), chronicles the story of a young Irish boy growing up in India during the waning years of British imperialism.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is the story of one man's journey to the interior of Africa in pursuit of a tyrannical madman named Kurtz. The story "Mrs. Bathurst" has been compared to this novel.

In one sense, Kipling anticipates modernist writers who defamiliarize their narrative styles□make them obscure and cryptic□in order to emphasize the distance between narrative and reality.'"

Mrs Bathurst' is a tragedy of love and death, but its details are obscure and ambiguous."

The whole narrative may, in fact, be considered an extended example of aposiopesis."

Further Study

Bodelson, C. A. "The Hardest of All the Stories: 'Mrs. Bathurst,'" in *Aspects of Kipling's Art*, Barnes and Noble, 1964, pp. 124-54.

Bodelson examines the cinematic footage in "Mrs. Bathurst" as a key element in the story, particularly with regard to how it advances the theme of haunting guilt. He also discusses the relationship between the characters Mrs. Bathurst and Vickery.

Brock, P. W. "'Mrs. Bathurst': A Final Summing Up," in *The Kipling Journal*, Vol. 31, September, 1964, pp. 6-10.

Comments on the chronology, symbolism, and action of the story.

Carrington, Charles. *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, Macmillan and Co., 1955, 549 p.

Explores connections between Kipling's life and his works.

McClure, John A. *Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction*, Harvard University Press, 1981, 182 p.

Offers an in-depth look at colonial themes in Kipling's stories written in the 1880s and 1890s.

Seymour-Smith, Martin. "Mrs. Bathurst," in *Rudyard Kipling* , Queen Anne Press, 1989, pp. 305-24.

Comments at length on the ambiguity of " Mrs. Bathurst."

Stinton, T. C. W. "What Really Happened in 'Mrs. Bathurst'?" in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1, January, 1988, pp. 55-74.

Compares "Mrs. Bathurst" to other Kipling stories.

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Seymour-Smith, Martin. "Mrs. Bathurst," in *Rudyard Kipling* , Queen Anne Press, 1989, pp. 305-24.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Short Stories for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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