Mrs. Spring Fragrance Study Guide

Mrs. Spring Fragrance by Edith Maude Eaton

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

"Mrs. Spring Fragrance" is the title story in Sui Sin Far's first and only collection of short stories, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance,* published in 1912. The collection also contains twenty stories about children, collectively known as "Tales of Chinese Children." As a whole, the collection discusses issues of racism, assimilation, and the alienation of Chinese Americans in North America. The title story describes the matchmaking tendencies of a recent arrival to the United States, who eagerly assimilates American customs and language and meddles in the lives of her neighbors. Through this character sketch of a young married Chinese woman, Far also subtly satirizes the patronizing attitude of the policies of the United States government and its citizens towards Asian immigrants. Mrs. Spring Fragrance's wry and insightful observations of the incidents in her neighborhood are heavily ironic.

The other stories in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* also express the struggle of Chinese Americans to find identity in an oppressive society, particularly from a woman's point of view. Sui Sin Far, a pseudonym of Edith Maude Eaton, was born of a Chinese mother and a British father and moved to the United States at a young age, eventually becoming a journalist in the Pacific Northwest and in Canada. Keenly aware of her heritage, Far embraced her Chinese roots in an era when many were quick to become as American as possible. Writing under the pseudonym Sui Sin Far instantly identified her as an immigrant, and lent credence to her writings, which were often social commentaries on the state of immigrant life in the still-growing United States.

Author Biography

Sui Sin Far was born in England in 1865 as Edith Maude Eaton. She was the eldest of fourteen children born to an English shipping merchant, Edward Eaton, and Grace Trefusis Eaton, a Chinese woman whom Edward met on his frequent business trips to Shanghai. Proud of her Chinese heritage, Far's mother often went by the name Lotus Blossom. Far's father had studied art in France, and her mother was an orphan raised by Christian missionaries in China. The Eaton family lived primarily in England and Canada, where Far went to school. Even though her given name was British, and her appearance was not markedly Chinese, Far she proudly claimed her Chinese identity. She recounts the painful anxiety of being a Eurasian in her 1909 autobiographical sketch, *Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian,* first published in the New York newspaper *The Independent :*

The question of nationality perplexes my little [childhood] brain. Why are we what we are? I and my brothers and sisters? Why did God make us to be hooted and stared at? Papa is English, Mamma is Chinese. Why couldn't we have been either one thing or the other? Why is my mother's race despised. I look into the faces of my father and mother. Is she not every bit as dear and good as he? Why? Why? . . . I do not confide in my father and mother. They would not understand. How could they? He is English, she is Chinese. I am different to both of them— a stranger, tho their own child.

Living in Canada, her family suffered several financial setbacks and Far had to leave school at the age of ten to work. Though her formal education had ended, she spent several hours a day with Mrs. William Darling, a family friend, who tutored her in French and music. In a 1912 article in *The Boston Globe,* entitled, "Sui Sin Far the Half Chinese Writer, Tells of Her Career," Far recalled: "I, now in my 11th year, entered into two lives, one devoted entirely to family concerns; the other, a withdrawn life of thought and musing." She spent her adolescence occupied in odd jobs like crocheting lace and selling her father's paintings. She suffered a debilitating illness at age 14 that required a lengthy period of bedrest and which she describes as, "affect[ing] both head and heart and retard[ing] development both mentally and physically." This illness made her prone to attacks of fever for the rest of her life and exacerbated her later development of inflammatory rheumatism.

At age eighteen, Far got a job at *The Montreal Star* as a typesetter and later worked in several law offices as a stenographer. She traveled to Jamaica as a reporter and lived in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Boston, returning often to Montreal to visit her family. All the while, Far was writing short stories and nurturing her ambition to write a book about the Chinese-American experience. She met many influential figures in the various offices in which she worked, and they encouraged her to publish her stories in local papers. Her early fiction was published in newspapers such as *The Montreal Daily Witness, The Montreal Daily Star, The Dominion Illustrated, Texas Liftings,* and *The Detroit Free Press.* Not all of these stories dealt with the Chinese immigrant experience, but the few that did often expressed controversial opinions such as "The Land of the Free," which later became an entry in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* Far was able to express

her opinions because she often did not sign her newspaper submissions. In her later writing career, Far, who had been writing under the name Edith Maude Eaton, took on her pen name and definitive identity as a Chinese-American woman and dedicated her works to exploring and vindicating the Chinese American experience.

In San Francisco, Far immersed herself in Chinatown, the largest concentration of Chinese people outside of China. Far commented in her *Boston Globe* article that life in San Francisco nearly cured her weak health: "I fell in love with the City of the Golden Gate . . . the place in which all the old ache in my bones fell away from them, never to return again." She moved to Seattle where she worked in a Chinese mission school, to Los Angeles, and then finally to Boston where she hoped to work on her book. Far commented in the *Boston Globe* on her final conviction to dedicate herself to writing her book on Chinese Americans: "a shock of sudden grief so unfitted me for mechanical work [stenography, typesetting etc.] that I determined to emancipate myself from the torture of writing other people's thoughts and words with a heart full of my own." She wrote this article in May of 1912 and was anticipating the publication of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* as well as the forthcoming *The Dream of a Lifetime,* which was never published. Far died in 1914, two years after the article was printed. Of her sojourn to Boston, Far wrote: "I came here with the intention of publishing a book and planting a few Eurasian thoughts in Western literature."

Plot Summary

Although Mrs. Spring Fragrance has lived in Seattle for only five years, her husband says "There are no more American words for her learning." Having quickly become skilled at the English language and American customs, Mrs. Spring Fragrance has become friendly with a young woman who lives next door, Laura, who is the eighteen-year-old daughter of Chinese immigrants. Laura's parents, the Chin Yuens, have decided to adhere to Chinese tradition and have their daughter marry a man she has never met. Laura confides in Mrs. Spring Fragrance that she does not want to marry the young man, the son of a Chinese schoolteacher, because she is in love with Kai Tzu, an American who likes to play baseball and sing popular songs. Giving advice to a young lovelorn friend, Mrs. Spring Fragrance quotes Tennyson: "'Tis better to have loved and lost. Than never to have loved at all."

Puzzled upon overhearing these lines of poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance, who has been eavesdropping on his wife, seeks an interpretation from his white American neighbor, a student at the University of Washington. Mr. Spring Fragrance is even more confused at the student's careless interpretation and declares angrily: "The truth of the teaching! . . . There is no truth in it whatever. It is disobedient to reason. Is it not better to have what you do not love than to love what you do not have?" Mr. Spring Fragrance decides that American logic is plagued with "unwisdom."

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Spring Fragrance travels to San Francisco to visit her cousin. While there, she arranges for Laura's finance, the man she does not want to marry, to meet Ah Oi, who is known as the most beautiful girl in San Francisco. Just as Mrs. Spring Fragrance has intended, Ah Oi and the schoolmaster's son fall in love and get married. Mrs. Spring Fragrance writes an exuberant letter to Laura telling her the good news. Now, Laura is free to marry her true love, Kai Tzu. She also writes a letter to Mr. Spring Fragrance, ingratiatingly asking him if she can stay in San Francisco another week so she can make fudge for a festival. She also adds a few details about a lecture she has attended, called "America — the Protector of China!" Sarcastically, she asks her husband to forget that the barber charges him a dollar for what he charges an American only fifteen cents, and for the government detaining his brother rather than letting him stay with the Spring Fragrances; "he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty."

Still pondering the "unwise" poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance begins to worry when his wife extends her stay in San Francisco. He has received a letter from a friend who writes that he has seen Mrs. Spring Fragrance many times together with Man You, the schoolmaster's handsome son. Unaware that his wife is matchmaking Man You and Ah Oi on Laura's behalf, Mr. Spring Fragrance suspects that his wife is having an affair. He questions the university student again about the mysterious lines of poetry, and comes to the conclusion that Mrs. Spring Fragrance has gone to San Francisco to find the "love that she has lost." Angrily, he plans to invite some men over for a party to get his mind off his seemingly unfaithful wife.

When Mrs. Spring Fragrance at last returns, her husband is rude and gruff. He barely speaks to her and pretends that he must rush off to take care of business. Mrs. Spring Fragrance is surprised at his behavior, but hides her hurt emotions. Laura, having seen Mrs. Spring Fragrance arrive, runs over to hug and thank her for her efforts on her behalf. While the women are talking, Mr. Spring Fragrance overhears their conversation and realizes that he has been mistaken about his wife's infidelity. After Laura leaves, Mr. Spring Fragrance sheepishly tells his wife that he is very happy about Laura and Kai Tzu. Surprised at her usually business-minded husband's interest in romance, Mrs. Spring Fragrance happily declares: "You must have been reading my American poetry books!" At this remark, Mr. Spring Fragrance exclaims: "American poetry is detestable, *abhorrable!*" Confused, Mrs. Spring Fragrance asks why he has formed a hatred for American poetry, but he only answers by giving her as an anniversary present a beautiful jade pendant that she once admired in a jewelry store window.

Characters

Ah Oi

Ah Oi is described as the prettiest young woman in San Francisco. She is quite popular and Mrs. Spring Fragrance introduces her to Man You knowing that he will easily fall in love with her beauty and charm. When Ah Oi and Man You decide to marry, Laura is no longer obligated to Man You and is free to marry Kai Tzu.

Carman

See University Student

Laura Chin Yuen

Laura is the young Chinese-American woman whom Mrs. Spring Fragrance is trying to help. She has been in love with Kai Tzu for some time, but because of her parents's insistence that she marry the man they have chosen for her, Laura believes she will have to live her life in misery. Laura represents the more Americanized second generation of Asian Americans who often struggle with their parents conservative and traditional lifestyles. As Laura's Chinese name in the story, Mai Gwi Far, meaning "rose," is similar to the author's own name, Sui Sin Far, meaning "Chinese lily," the author may be asserting an identification with this young woman who is trapped between two cultures.

Kai Tzu

Kai Tzu is the man Laura loves but cannot marry. In addition to not having been selected by Laura's parents, he was born and raised in the United States and is described as "as ruddy and stalwart as any young Westerner, [and] was noted amongst baseball players as one of the finest pitchers on the Coast." As Laura's parents are interested in retaining their Chinese culture, the Chin Yuens's objection to Kai Tzu may be linked to his American upbringing.

Mai Gwi Far

See Laura Chin Yuen

Man You

The son of a Chinese government schoolmaster, Man You has most likely been selected as Laura's husband for his good family and educational background. It is implied that perhaps he is not enthusiastic about an arranged marriage, as he seizes the opportunity to date a young woman who is introduced to him by Mrs. Spring Fragrance.

Mrs. Jade Spring Fragrance

Mrs. Spring Fragrance is the main character of the story, as well as the namesake of the story collection. She is a young Chinese woman living in Seattle who interacts with her multi-racial neighbors. Mrs. Spring Fragrance often serves as the cultural bridge between characters who are in conflict due to their cultural differences. In "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," she cleverly arranges for her Chinese-American friend, Laura, to marry her true love without offending Laura's parents, who have already pre-arranged a match for their daughter. In this case, Mrs. Spring Fragrance facilities harmony between the older generation of Chinese immigrants and their more Americanized children. In a later story, "The Inferior Woman," Mrs. Spring Fragrance similarly convinces an American woman to allow her son to marry his true love rather than the snooty upper-class woman the mother hopes he will choose instead. Mrs. Spring Fragrance is often described as a "trickster" figure, that is, an entertaining figure that can subtly charm and persuade people. The "trickster" often speaks and acts with humor and irony, thus while she is telling funny stories or acting silly, she utters deep truths about her society, functioning much like the fools and clowns in Shakespeare's plays.

Mr. Sing Yook Spring Fragrance

Mr. Spring Fragrance is a curio merchant in Seattle's Chinatown. He is portrayed as somewhat hot-tempered and conservative in his politics. The plot and humor of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" is primarily based on Mr. Spring Fragrance's misunderstanding of Western poetry and his subsequent doubts about his wife's fidelity. Though Mr. Spring Fragrance tries to be a stern and domineering husband, he is not so in actuality. Although he momentarily doubts his wife's faithfulness, he loves Mrs. Spring Fragrance very much and when he learns that he is mistaken, he offers his wife the peace offering of a jade necklace that she once admired.

University Student

The Spring Fragrances' next door neighbor, the university student, is the impetus for Mr. Spring Fragrance's misunderstanding of Western poetry. When Mr. Spring Fragrance asks him to explain the meaning of, "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than not to have loved at all," the student drifts off into his own daydreams of the many girls he has dated. In their second conversation, Mr. Spring Fragrance asks him why he thinks

America claims to be "noble" yet insists on holding his older brother in a detention center, the student again skirts the question and replies that sometimes Americans have to act against their "principles." The student is portrayed as self-absorbed and arrogant and is described as "not [having] the slightest doubt that he could explain the meaning of all things in the universe." Of course, it is his inability to explain anything to Mr. Spring Fragrance that causes Mr. Spring Fragrance so much anxiety. When Mr. Spring Fragrance decides to hold a "smoking party" to get his mind off his wife, the student suggests that Mr. Spring Fragrance only invite other Chinese Americans so that he can get an insider's look into Chinese-American life. The student later uses this information to write a newspaper article, exploiting and exoticizing the Chinese culture. Though Far gives the student a name, Carman, she only mentions it in passing and chooses to describe him primarily as the American student. By keeping his identity vague and generic, Far may be implying that the student's insensitive and unethical behavior towards Chinese Americans is representative of America's attitude as a whole.

Themes

Culture Clash

The most prevalent theme in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" is the culture clash between the Spring Frangrances' Chinese customs and those of their adopted country. The conflicts in the story arise from the misunderstandings between people and their cultures. Mr. Spring Fragrance worries that since his wife is learning Western poetry, she is becoming more American than Chinese. In fact, Mr. Spring Fragrance thinks she is so Americanized that he remarks: "There are no more American words for her learning." This remark underscores how quickly Mrs. Spring Fragrance has assimilated American culture. Though he may admire his wife for her quick learning, her quotations of Western poetry confuse him, especially in regard to American ideas about love. (A subtle joke in the story is that Tennyson, whom Mrs. Spring Fragrance quotes, is not American at all; he is British.) The American university student who lives next door further confuses Mr. Spring Fragrance, as he can only explain the poetry from the point of view of a modern American bachelor who is free to choose his girlfriends. Since his marriage was pre-arranged, Mr. Spring Fragrance begins to fear that his wife may be taking this "American" advice to seek out her true love. This leads Mr. Spring Fragrance to decide that American values are not so desirable after all.

Laura Chin Yuen's life is also complicated by the differences between Chinese culture, which her parents would like to adhere to, and the American culture in which she has been raised. Though her parents quite Americanized, they would like to retain the Chinese customs regarding marriage, and have Laura marry a man she has not yet met. As a result, Laura lives in misery, expecting that she must renounce her true love out of obedience to her parents.

As the only white American who figures prominently in the story, the University of Washington student represents dominant American culture. His culture "clashes" with Chinese-American culture when he unsuccessfully interprets Tennyson for Mr. Spring Fragrance. In the exchange between Mr. Spring Fragrance and the student, the student drifts off into a reverie about his numerous girlfriends, the women he has "loved and lost," ignoring Mr. Spring Fragrance's desperate attempts to understand the poetry. On their second meeting, Mr. Spring Fragrance is enraged that his wife might be having an affair and calls together a "smoking party." The student opportunistically asks him to only invite Chinese-Americans so that he can do a write-up about "authentic Chinese life" for the college newspaper.

The university student's culture "clashes" with Mr. Spring Fragrance's insofar as the student is uninterested in communicating with Mr. Spring Fragrance as a fellow American. Absorbed by thoughts of his complacent bachelor life, the student takes little time to help Mr. Spring Fragrance understand his mistaken notion of Western poetry. The student is only interested in Chinese-American culture as a "scoop" for a newspaper article.

Bridging Cultural Gaps

Mrs. Spring Fragrance acts as a bridge between Chinese and American cultures by maintaining characteristics of both cultures. While the story describes her as so American "that there are no more words for her learning," Mrs. Spring Fragrance never gives up her Chinese culture. Respecting Chinese customs, she does not tell Laura to disobey her parents, but instead plans a subtle scheme that ultimately satisfies the parties involved. She maintains some of the submissiveness of women in ancient Asian cultures, evidenced in the letter she sends to her husband, which she addresses to "Great and Honored Man." When she wants to extend her stay in San Francisco, she asks her husband's "permission" first. Perhaps adhering to an Asian tradition of modesty, she mixes praise with phrases of great humility: "there is much feasting and merry making under the lanterns in honor of your Stupid Thorn." Finally, she signs her letter: "Your ever loving and obedient woman."

On the other hand, Mrs. Spring Fragrance is a very Americanized woman. Not only does she quote Western poetry, but she is an expert in making fudge. In San Francisco she attends lectures in English given by prominent political figures and instead of forcing Laura to obey her parents in blind adherence to tradition, she cleverly helps her marry the man she loves.

Most importantly, Mrs. Spring Fragrance is neither entirely American or entirely Chinese. She utilizes positive aspects of both cultures to create a balanced identity as well as help others, like Laura, who may be trapped in between cultures. She is a direct contrast to her husband who rejects American culture because of a few lines of poetry he does not understand and to the university student who is not interested in truly getting to know Chinese immigrants.

Gender Roles

On the surface, Mr. and Mrs. Spring Fragrance abide by traditional gender roles, but subtle incidents in the story show a more complicated relationship. For example, while Mrs. Spring Fragrance asks her husband for "permission" to stay in San Francisco, she intends to stay regardless of her husband's approval. She writes in the letter: "Waiting, by the wonderful wire of the telegram message, your gracious permission to remain for the celebration of the Fifth Moon." Her husband never writes back, but Mrs. Spring Fragrance is not at all concerned and enjoys the rest of her vacation. Embarrassed by her independence, Mr. Spring Fragrance tells his friends that he is the one who asked her to stay away longer so that he can give an all-male "smoking party." Mrs. Spring Fragrance apparently has much control over her husband domestically and emotionally.

Race and Racism

The exploration of racism in this story is subtle. The university student considers the Chinese culture of his neighbors as something foreign and exotic, and he plans to

exploit it for the purpose of a sensational newspaper article. The student also has no answer for Mr. Spring Fragrance's queries about the illogic of American society. When the student asserts that everyone who comes to America is treated like royalty, Mr. Spring Fragrance asks him why his brother is still held up in an immigration detention pen. The student's response is that sometimes the American government must act against their noble principles. This facile answer does not explain *why* in the case of Chinese immigration the American government is acting against their "principles" and merely condones this unjust treatment of Chinese immigrants. Perhaps American "principles" are not so noble after all.

In her letter to her husband, Mrs. Spring Fragrance cleverly lists the case of discrimination against Chinese Americans while pretending to tolerate it. She remarks that she has been to a lecture called, "America, the Protector of China!" The lecture was so eloquent that Mrs. Spring Fragrance urges her husband to "forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave while he humbly submits to the American man a bill of fifteen cents. And murmur no more because your honored elder brother . . . is detained under the roof-tree of this great Government instead of under your own humble roof. Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty. What is the loss of ten hundred years or ten thousand times ten dollars compared with the happiness of knowing oneself so securely sheltered?" The heavy irony is this passage denotes that Mrs. Spring Fragrance and other Chinese Americans will not "forget to remember" the legalized discrimination imposed on them.

Prejudice and Tolerance

White Americans are not the only racist figures in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance." When he does not readily understand Western poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance jumps to the conclusion that American logic is flawed and "unwise." He does bring up the hypocrisy of America claiming to be benevolent while consistently discriminating against Chinese immigrants, but from his limited experience with Western poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance decides that everything else about America must be deplorable too. The way Mr. Spring Fragrance forms his hasty negative opinion about America is analogous to the way dominant American culture forms quick and irrational judgments about minority groups without fully understanding them. Like the dominant American culture, Mr. Spring Fragrance is guilty of stereotyping.

Politics

In addition to the humorous romances between Laura and Kai Tzu, and Mr. and Mrs. Spring Fragrance, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" provides a political critique of legalized discrimination against the Chinese. The detention of Mr. Spring Fragrance's brother evokes America's history of legalized racism against the Chinese. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred further entry of any Chinese citizens into the United States and previous to this law, Chinese were allowed to immigrate primarily as laborers for the

building of the Transcontinental Railroad (for which labor they were grossly underpaid). Any immigrant not planning to work on the railroad was charged a head tax of $500, an exorbitant sum at the turn of the century, often making it impossible for the wives and families of the laborers to come to the country. Even if a Chinese citizen met all the conditions to immigrate, he/she was often detained unjustifiably for indefinite periods of time at immigration detention centers to prevent rapid increases in the Chinese American population. In addition to these legalized forms of racism, Chinese in America were discriminated against in everyday society as exhibited in the attitude of the university student.

Style

Point of View and Narration

"Mrs. Spring Fragrance" uses "author omniscient" narration, meaning that an outside voice describes the incidents of the story and is privy to the thoughts and feelings of each of the characters. By knowing the inner thoughts of the major characters of the story, the reader can form an opinion about them. For example, knowing the university student's motives in attending the "smoking party," and Mr. Spring Fragrance's mistake in prematurely judging American culture, helps the reader understand that they are both enacting racial prejudice.

Dramatic Irony

Much of the plot of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" depends on characters being misinformed or ignorant of others's actions while the reader is fully aware of all the situations going on at one time. This is called "dramatic irony." Mr. Spring Fragrance's anger and anxiety hinges on his ignorance of his wife's real motives for visiting San Francisco. This misunderstanding leads to the climax of the plot and also introduces much humor into the story.

Irony and Hyperbole

The political critique in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" is expressed through irony, saying or doing one thing while meaning another. Instead of directly stating her views on American racism, Mrs. Spring Fragrance pretends that she is praising America and its benevolence. In the letter to her husband, she speaks in hyperbole, exaggerated praise or criticism to prove a point. By excessively praising America's so-called altruistic treatment of Chinese immigrants, Mrs. Spring Fragrance hints to the reader that her praise is ironic. What she is expressing beneath the surface of her words is an attack on American racism. Both Mr. and Mrs. Spring Fragrance call attention to the ironic situation of America claiming to be the "protector of China" while overcharging them for haircuts and detaining their relatives at immigration centers. There is also irony in Mrs. Spring Fragrance believing that Tennyson was an American poet. Not only was he British, but he held the title of baron, indicating his position within the British aristocracy. Perhaps Far was subtly commenting that Asians who do not distinguish between various Caucasian nationalities are like Americans who often have difficulty distinguishing between various Asian cultures.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the persuasive use of speech to gain personal or political advantage. Rhetorical speech often utilizes hyperbole and irony. "Mrs. Spring Fragrance"

challenges the American rhetoric that the United States treats its immigrants fairly. Public speakers and politicians often use rhetoric to gain votes and public approval. Mrs. Spring Fragrance attends such a political speech in San Francisco, entitled, "America, the Protector China!" that hopes to lead Americans to believe that Chinese in the United States are treated fairly. On a smaller scale, the university student uses this kind of racist rhetoric to deflect Mr. Spring Fragrance's accusatory query regarding his brother's detention. The student replies: "Well, that is a shame — 'a beastly shame,' as the Englishman says. But understand, old fellow, we that are real Americans are up against that [holding immigrants unjustifiably at detention centers]— even more than you. It is against our principles." As in this example, rhetorical speech is often manipulative and insincere, intended to mask unpleasant realities. "Rhetorical questions" are questions posed to prove a point and do not expect an answer. Mrs. Spring Fragrance uses rhetorical questions herself in her letter to her husband regarding his brother: "What is the loss of ten hundred years or ten thousand times ten dollars compared with the happiness of knowing oneself so securely sheltered?" Charged with irony, this rhetorical question is meant to uncover the unfair treatment of Chinese immigrants.

Historical Context

Far wrote about the experience of Chinese immigrants in a politically sensitive environment. In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States encouraged mass immigration of young Chinese men to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations and to California to build the first transcontinental railroad. Any immigrant who did not plan to labor in these projects was often charged an exorbitant entry tax. Thus, the early Chinese immigrants were mostly bachelors or young men who left their wives and families overseas. Once in the United States, the laborers were legally forbidden to live in white communities or marry outside of their race. After the completion of the railroad, strict hiring regulations, as well as employers's personal discrimination against minorities, left only menial jobs like food service or laundering available to Chinese Americans. In *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History,* Sucheng Chan quotes an interview with a Chinese laundry owner: "White customers were prepared to patronize [a Chinese man] as a laundryman because as such his status was low and constituted no competitive threat. If you stop to think about it, there's a very real difference between the person who washes your soiled clothing and the one who fills your prescription. As a laundryman [the Chinese man] occupied a status which was in accordance with the social definition of the place in the economic hierarchy suitable for a member of an 'inferior race.'" These discriminatory laws and practices helped form the early Chinatowns in large cities across the country, where Chinese Americans fostered and developed their own rich culture.

Discomfited by this new population of a people of color, Chinese immigration was effectively halted in 1882 for a period of ten years with the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was renewed in 1902. Absolutely no more Chinese were allowed into the United States. White Americans compared the presence of Chinese to a disease, calling them the "Yellow Peril." Jacob Riis, a preeminent social commentator at the time wrote in his study of tenement life in New York: "The Chinese are in no sense a desirable element of the population . . . they serve no useful purpose here [New York], whatever they may have done elsewhere in other days." To paraphrase, Riis was saying that while in the past they were useful on the sugar plantations and in building the transcontinental railroad, Chinese Americans no longer served a purpose in the United States and therefore no longer deserved to be here. Others agreed that the Chinese should be shipped back. As Roger Daniel quoted one politician: "The health, wealth, prosperity and happiness of our State demand their [the Chinese] expulsion from our shores."

In this environment of legalized racism, writers exploring the unequal treatment of Chinese in America would find it difficult to publish overt criticism of the United States government. Most Asian-American writers wrote non-threatening "orientalized" books that represented Asian and Asian Americans as happy, carefree, and exotically interesting. Modern critics accuse these books of accommodating a racist American sensibility while erasing the legislated injustices enacted on Asian Americans. Far's stories seem to fall into this category of "accommodation," but beneath the surface of harmless words, Far's use of irony and implication subtly criticize American racism.

Critical Overview

Working in the heavily Sinophobic environment of the turn-of-the century, Far had to carefully choose her words. Any explicit criticism of the Chinese-American situation might have been considered subversive and unfit for publication. As a result, Far disguised her critique of American society under a surface of charming, "harmless" stories about Chinese-American life. White Americans were indeed curious about the Asian Americans, and a number of books were published during this time that were intended to "inform" the dominant culture about the immigrants' exotic lifestyles. The D. Lothrop Publishing Company in Boston published a group of works entitled "When I Was a Boy in . . ." that included Lee Yan Phou's *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887), New Il-Han's *When I Was a Boy in Korea* (1928), and Sakae Shioya's *When I Was a Boy in Japan* (1906). The books in this series rarely touched on the struggles the authors may have had in adjusting to life in the United States. Because the American publishers were not interested in publishing indictments of their own country, they ensured that these books provided interesting, enlightening, and *harmless* information about the authors' Asian homelands. For now, this satisfied and accommodated Americans' desire for a lively and non-threatening account of Asian lifestyles.

With her verbose and flowery style, use of Chinese dialect and pidgin English (often for comical effect), and "insider" details of Chinatown, Far did not readily appear to be different from the other "Oriental" writers of her time. The author's power lies not in overt and sermonizing racial accusations, but in subtlety and suggestiveness that American readers of the time were likely to overlook. Even contemporary critics miss her irony and sarcasm; Lorraine Dong and Marlon K. Hom claim that while Far's work may be sympathetic to the Chinese-American experience, it perpetuates stereotypes. This glossing over of the transgressive potential of works like *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* unmasks readers' willful erasure of attempts at Chinese cultural empowerment. Denying the work's moments of sarcasm, subtle or blatant, the book's audience reveals that it is more comfortable placing and reading the work as a fanciful. oriental, and harmless group of tales in any time period. Through *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* Far has created an ingenious form of political resistance while working within the limits of dominant culture. It is the readers' choice to be satisfied with a facile, surface reading of her works or to recognize its deeper, political interpretation.

Far's sister, Winnifred Eaton, was also a writer and published under the Japanese pseudonym Onoto Watanna. The Japanese in America were considered at this time more elegant and refined than the Chinese. Eaton capitalized on this perception and created a "fan and slipper image" that catered to curious white Americans. Watanna wrote and published with great success with Rand McNally in New York, publishing numerous romances, a cookbook, and a preface to a volume of American poetry over a period of twenty-five years. Watanna's romances are uncomplicated love stories in which, typically, a white American traveler goes to Japan, falls in love with a Japanese woman and teaches her how to love. The content of these stories pander to white America's fantasy that the coy and cowering Orient waits in anticipation of a more educated and more passionate American figure to enlighten it.

Should Winnifred Eaton be reproached for abjuring her Chinese heritage for an easier, more profitable Japanese one? Or, was she, like her sister, playing a trick on American readers by expressing critical subtexts beneath the enchanting and seemingly harmless surface of her stories? A translation of the ideograms that represent Winnifred's pseudonym reveal that "wata (ru)" means "to cross," and "na" means "to name." Perhaps then, Winnifred's name that "crosses names" is playing a joke on the reader who believes that these stories are nothing but sincere representations of Japanese life written by an actual Japanese woman.

As a half-Chinese, half-British woman, Far was keenly aware of the racist pressures surrounding literary production. Knowing that negative portrayals of Chinese-American life would not be published, she masked her often bitter feelings about America in the blithe and carefree collection of stories *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* Some of the more lighthearted titles in the collection are: "In the Land of the Free," "The Chinese Lily," and "The Prize China Baby." Of course, there was the second part of her collection, "Tales of Chinese Children" that promised adorable depictions of Asian babies. Like "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," the content of many of these stories was subversive and serious. For example, "In the Land of the Free" is not about achieving the American dream as it as it seems to be. It ends with the tragedy of a toddler forgetting his mother after having been detained in an immigration center for a number of years. "The Chinese Lily" is not about a beautiful Chinese maiden, but about a crippled Chinese-American woman living alone in a Chinatown garret. Initially, 2,500 copies of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* were published in 1912. The collection was not widely reviewed at the time, though a review in the *Independent* stated that "The conflict between occidental and oriental ideals and the hardships of the American immigration laws furnish the theme for most of the tales and the reader is not only interested but has his mind widened by becoming acquainted with novel points of view." The book was out of print for decades before it was republished in 1995, along with a biography on Far, by Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks. This recent resurgence of interest in her life and writing is part of a larger trend in which women writers from the early twentieth-century are being re-evaluated as important voices in literature and feminism in an era that was almost completely devoid of a woman's perspective in the arts and sciences.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Yoonmee Chang has a master's degree in English and American literature from the University of Pennsylvania where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate. She works on contemporary Asian-American literature and in the following essay she discusses the subtexts of Sui Sin Far's "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" that critique America's history of often legalized oppression of Asian-American immigrants.

As a writer of Chinese ancestry writing about the Chinese-American experience, Sui Sin Far, pseudonym of Edith Maude Eaton (1865-1914), would have found it easier at the turn-of-the-century to write about anything else. Her first and only collection of short stories, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance,* was published in 1912, just thirty years after the Chinese Exclusion Act and twenty years after its 1902 renewal. Once their labor was no longer needed on the first transcontinental railroad or the Hawaiian sugar plantations, the Chinese in America were considered undesirable by politicians who wanted to preserve the white face of America. Literary critic Susan Lanser in *Feminist Studies* recalls the pejorative epithets used to describe the Chinese immigrants: "The Yellow Peril," and "hirsute, low-browed, big-faced, ox-like men of obviously low mentality." On the other end of the spectrum was the stereotype that the Chinese were enchanting, mysterious, and exotic. This was an era when the dominant culture's interest in Chinese-American culture extended only insofar as it was charming and interesting, not angry or politically threatening. The Asian-American literature of this time attests to this, for example, D. Lothrop Publishing Company's "When I Was a Boy" series (*When I Was a Boy in China,* (1887) *When I Was Boy in Japan,* (1906), *When I Was a Boy in Korea,* (1928), and Onoto Watanna's saccharine but bestselling Japanese romances (published between 1899-1925). Onoto Watanna (Winnifred Eaton) was Sui Sin Far's sister, and her adoption of a Japanese writing identity indicates how flexible the Eaton children's identity as Eurasians was. Both sisters resembled white Americans more than Asian Americans, but nonetheless, Sui Sin Far took on a Chinese American persona, despite the social adversity it ensured. In this intensely Sinophobic environment, Far challenged America's racist treatment of Chinese Americans, but aware that overt criticism would hardly be published, she wove her critique with subtly and irony into a surface of seemingly harmless words. In this essay, I will explore Sui Sin Far's technique in her short story, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance."

As the title character of the collection, Mrs. Spring Fragrance figures in several of Far's stories as a delightful "busy-body." She is introduced in the first lines of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" as being so fully Americanized that "there are no more American words for her learning." Ostensibly, this is the reason for her popularity among her white American and Chinese-American neighbors alike. She has become a favorite for her delicious American fudge and attends the popular social lectures of the day such as "America, the Protector of China."

But beneath her happily Americanized exterior, Mrs. Spring Fragrance harbors resentment against America's racist treatment of Chinese immigrants. To express her resentment overtly in sermons against racism might make Mrs. Spring Fragrance and

her creator, Sui Sin Far, unpopular or ignored, thus, she thinly conceals her real sentiments under a surface of irony.

For example, as Mrs. Spring Fragrance travels to San Francisco from her hometown of Seattle, she writes a letter to her husband praising a lecture she attended, entitled, "America, the Protector of China." She writes:

I am enjoying a most agreeable visit, and American friends, as also our own, strive benevolently for the accomplishment of my pleasure. Mrs. Samuel Smith, an American lady, known to my cousin, asked for my accompaniment to a magniloquent lecture the other evening. The subject was "America, the Protector of China!" It was most exhilarating, and the effect of so much expression of benevolence leads me to beg of you to forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave while he humbly submits to the American man a bill of fifteen cents. And murmur no more because your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the roof-tree of this great Government instead of under you own humble roof. Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty. What is the loss of ten hundred years or ten thousand times ten dollars compared with the happiness of knowing oneself so securely sheltered? All of this I have learned from Mrs. Samuel Smith, who is as brilliant and great of mind as one of your own superior sex.

The heavily ironic tone of this passage implies that Mrs. Spring Fragrance may not be entirely pleased with her life in America. She has recorded here a list of grievances and unfair treatment, but by couching it in praise of America, however insincere, Mrs. Spring Fragrance appears to be innocent of subversive sentiments. By encouraging her husband to "forget to remember" the discriminations he has experienced, she is charging Chinese Americans to *always* remember them. Incidentally, this letter also enacts a reversal of gender roles. She addresses her husband with the honorific, "Great and Honored Man," signs off with the submissive, "Your ever loving and obedient woman," in this letter asking permission to stay in San Francisco a little while longer. But though she says she will humbly await her husband's "gracious permission," Mrs. Spring Fragrance does not wait at all and continues her trip according to her own plans. Later in the story, Mr. Spring Fragrance is embarrassed by his wife's independent behavior and tells his neighbor that he she is staying away longer at his request, so that he can give a party for his male friends.

While Mr. Spring Fragrance may not be as clever as his wife, he expresses his own discontent about life in America. In a discussion with his white American neighbor, a student at the University of Washington, Mr. Spring Fragrance is puzzled by the student's comment that "everyone" is royalty in America. The student says: "all Americans are princes and princesses, and just as soon as a foreigner puts his foot upon our shores, he also becomes one the nobility— I mean, the royal family." This statement rings untrue for Mr. Spring Fragrance who wonders aloud why then his brother is detained at the immigration center if he is supposed to be part of the "nobility." The student's answer is evasive and rhetorical. According to him, sometimes Americans must act against their "principles." Though this answer does not satisfy Mr. Spring

Fragrance, the conversation moves on to other topics. While this passage may not offer any concrete answers to Mr. Spring Fragrance's general question regarding discrimination against Chinese immigrants, Sui Sin Far at least allows this bit of historical information to be articulated. By placing it in a casual and seemingly harmless conversation, Far calls attention to the hypocrisy of American rhetoric. By not dwelling on its implications and putting the words in the mouth of a befuddled, generally harmless man, Far deflects criticism that her work may be threatening to the American government. In this way, Sui Sin Far briefly speaks the unspeakable, subtly instigating the careful reader's mind.

Structured around Mr. Spring Fragrance's rash conclusions regarding his wife's fidelity, the story as a whole is a critique of making irrational and unjustified judgments about any group of people. Mr. Spring Fragrance bases his entire opinion about American culture on a trivial misunderstanding of Western poetry. The university student's inattention aggravates Mr. Spring Fragrance's confusion, and he concludes that the mysterious lines of poetry, "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all," indicates his wife's desire for seek her true love. In his anger, he decides that his wife's Americanization is going to ruin his marriage, and he concludes that the poetry as well as American culture in general is "detestable, *abhorrable!*" Mr. Spring Fragrance is guilty of stereotyping. By taking one small piece of information, Mr. Spring Fragrance makes a wholesale negative judgment about the entire culture, which results in confusion and misunderstanding. In this way, Far warns against stereotyping and prejudice from any angle, whether it be the majority against a minority or vice versa.

Through "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," Far offers a partial reconciliation to the disparate cultures. The heroine of the story is Mrs. Spring Fragrance, who is neither entirely Chinese, and despite her early description, entirely American. She is a bridge figure who emerges triumphantly from the story precisely because she achieves a balance between cultures. For example, when her friend Laura Chin Yuen is despondent over her pre-arranged marriage, Mrs. Spring Fragrance respects both Chinese and American views of marriage. While she believes that Laura should indeed be permitted to marry her true love, she does not directly challenge Laura's conservative Chinese parents. Instead, she manipulates events so that Laura's betrothed will fall in love with someone else, freeing Laura and her family from the marriage arrangement. In this way, the Chin Yuen's desire to retain Chinese customs is not directly challenged while Laura's more "American" notion of marrying her childhood sweetheart can be fulfilled. Mrs. Spring Fragrance's strategy is much like Far's. By working subtly and indirectly, she enables social changes without inciting public opposition.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance has been described by literary critics as a "trickster" figure. The privilege of a "trickster" is to move in and out of social boundaries, criticizing those boundaries without reproach. The "trickster" might be compared to the fool or clown in Shakespeare's plays who often speaks the unspoken, or what others will not articulate for fear of punishment. Because of the fool's low social standing and his reputation for uttering harmless and entertaining nonsense, his often insightful criticism of the social apparatus, for instance criticism of the King, goes unpunished. Mrs. Spring Fragrance travels through Far's stories uttering such insights, but her charming reputation,

excessive, though ironic, praise of America, and her real efforts at helping those around her, buffer her from blame. Even when she is criticizing Americans, they often thank and support her. In the second story of the collection, "The Inferior Woman," Mrs. Spring Fragrance visits her American neighbors for the purpose of writing a book. In a clever reversal of the stereotype that Chinese are mysterious and exotic, Mrs. Spring Fragrance declares: "Ah, these Americans! These mysterious, inscrutable, incomprehensible Americans! Had I the divine right of learning I would put them into an immortal book!" In this quote Mrs. Spring Fragrance reverses who is "them" and places white Americans as the culturally different outsider. But the characters of the story do not readily realize this and encourage her to sit in on their conversations so that she can

garner cultural information from them. In this story, Far conjures up the image of Mrs. Spring Fragrance as a silent but persistent observer lurking behind the routine goings-on of the white American woman's life. The absurdity of this situation belies the very real observation and scrutiny that the Chinese in America experience every day and the negative stereotypes and discriminatory treatment that result from them. The American women in "The Inferior Woman" let Mrs. Spring Fragrance sit in on their lives because they perceive her as harmless. Far was also perceived as harmless to the literary and political world and was permitted to publish her collection, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* It is only within the last ten years or so, nearly a century later, that Far's trenchant criticism of America's racism against Chinese has been properly unearthed and dominant culture has come to realize that she has been playing a trick on us all.

Source: Yoonmee Chang, for *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt from a longer essay, White-Parks compares the stories "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" and "The Inferior Woman" in an effort to highlight the various cultural influences on the character of Mrs. Spring Fragrance.

. . . Printed four months apart in *Hampton's Magazine* (January and May 1910), "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" and "The Inferior Woman" deal with many of Sui Sin Far's central themes and develop her most obvious trickster figure. Mrs. Spring Fragrance is the main character in both stories. "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" presents a comic fantasy world, ruled over by the "quaint, dainty" Mrs. Spring Fragrance, or "Jade," a young immigrant wife who, when she "first arrived in Seattle . . . was unacquainted with even one word of the American language"; "five years later, her husband speaking of her, says: 'There are no more American words for her learning.'" Unlike Chinese Americans in other Sui Sin Far stories, the Spring Fragrances live not in a Chinatown but in an integrated middle-class Seattle suburb with white neighbors on one side and Chinese on the other. Mr. Spring Fragrance, "a young curio merchant," is what westerners call "Americanized," and "Mrs. Spring Fragrance [is] even more so." Appropriately pluralistic, Mr. Spring Fragrance, when he gets home from his commute, sits in a bamboo settee on the verandah reading the *Chinese World* and feeding pigeons lichis out of his pocket. At the center of their blend of "East" and "West" life-styles is a marriage that combines elements of "arranged" and "romantic": "He had fallen in love with her picture before ever he had seen her, just as she had fallen in love with his! And when the marriage veil was lifted and each saw the other for the first time in the flesh, there had been no disillusion, no lessening of respect and affection, which those who had brought about the marriage had inspired in each young heart."

Desiring this same goal for others, Mrs. Spring Fragrance assumes the role of arranging marriages in both stories. She thus evokes a traditional figure out of Chinese culture, the matchmaker, who traditionally worked for the parents of the bride and groom to arrange marriages in which romantic love played no part. In this instance, however, the matchmaker becomes a catalyst to the Western romantic convention by helping young, second-generation Chinese American lovers outwit their more traditional immigrant parents. In "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," she conspires with the young woman Mai Gwi Far (Laura) to help her marry her "sweetheart" Kai Tzu, a young man whose Western ways are represented by his being "one of the finest [baseball] pitchers on the Coast" and his singing the British classic "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" to Mai Gwi Far/Laura's piano accompaniment.

In the midst of Mai Gwi Far and Kai Tzu's romance, Mrs. Spring Fragrance takes on another romance when she travels to San Francisco and introduces Ah Oi— "who had the reputation of being the prettiest Chinese girl in San Francisco and, according to Chinese gossip, the naughtiest" —to the son of a Chinese American schoolteacher and then accompanies the couple on their impromptu elopement. Ironically, the San Francisco matchmaking visit puts Mrs. Spring Fragrance's own marriage in jeopardy, because her husband misinterprets her absence and thinks she is having an affair. In a

comedy of errors, however, Mr. Spring Fragrance's fears are allayed, and all three matches are happily resolved. When Mai Gwi Far's father, Mr. Chin Yuen, who has been adamantly opposed to his daughter's marriage to Kai Tzu, suddenly accepts her romantic choice with scarcely a hint of dissension, the story's verisimilitude is strongly tested. The metaphor Mai Gwi Far's father voices in consent to the marriage is, however, overtly thematic: "'the old order is passing away and the new order is taking its place, even with us who are Chinese'.". . .

As in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," the verisimilitude of "The Inferior Woman" also is challenged by a too facile ending. When Mary Carman visits Alice and begs her to "'return home with me . . . . for the prettiest wedding of the season'," she changes her point of view as readily as Mr. Chin Yuen did in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance." Moreover, the "inferior woman's" superiority is proven by a classic Victorian test— Alice gets the man. As in so many stories about Chinese American women, Sui Sin Far slips her characters' lives into a groove she herself has rejected, that of a fairy-tale marriage. With Mrs. Spring Fragrance as catalyst, the dynamics involved in such marriages are virtually the same for both Chinese and white Americans.

On a deeper level, this storyteller figure plays "tricks" with political as well as romantic messages. For example, an anecdote in Mrs. Spring Fragrance's letter to her husband in "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" subverts the story's surface concern with the arrangement of marriages. This letter highlights Mrs. Samuel Smith, whom Mrs. Spring Fragrance has heard lecture on "America, the Protector of China" and describes "'as brilliant and [as] great of mind as one of your own superior sex.'" This satirical overstatement spoofs both Mrs. Smith's arrogance and the patriarchal assumptions to which white women in Sui Sin Far's fiction are so frequently handmaidens. The letter satirizes Mrs. Smith's claims about the protection offered to Chinese Americans by "'the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty,'" "protection" that should make Mr. Spring Fragrance "'forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave [and] . . . the American man . . . fifteen cents'" and that "'your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the rooftree of this great Government'." Clearly Mrs. Samuel Smith, like Ethel Evebrook, exemplifies the "new" woman, who goes beyond breaking silence and steps up to the public lectern in the public arena previously reserved for men, one that Alice Winthrop shuns. While Sui Sin Far herself takes up a public voice as a writer of fiction and journalism, she seems to distinguish between her own role and that of this breed of "new" woman, perhaps because she feels that— unlike the privileged Ethel Evebrook or Mrs. Smith but like Alice Winthrop— she has earned her voice through long and painful experience.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance's border position— between cultures and individuals, as matchmaker and trickster— mirrors Sui Sin Far's role as author, especially when Mrs. Spring Fragrance turns writer. "'I listen to what is said, I apprehend, I write it down,'" Mrs. Spring Fragrance says in "The Inferior Woman." Both Sui Sin Far and Mrs. Spring Fragrance arrange marriages, and both do it through fiction. The character's desire to put "'these mysterious, inscrutable, and incomprehensible Americans . . . into an immortal book'" for "her Chinese women friends" because "many American women wrote books" about the Chinese recalls the author's desire to write about Chinese for

Americans and the irony with which she did so. The interplay of author/ character identity is deftly revealed in one line in the text, when Mrs. Spring Fragrance imagines LaeChoo reading her book to Fei and Sie and Mai Gwi Far— all names of characters from various Sui Sin Far stories.

Motifs in the two Mrs. Spring Fragrance stories comically present topics we have found in the *Westerner* pieces. Both are concerned with the redistribution of power between races, sexes, classes, and generations, redistributions acted out on the threshold of change from old orders— Victorian England and Imperialist China— as an immigrant people found ways of adapting to new conditions. "Mrs. Spring Frangrance" in particular presents some major problems for interpreting these topics. At several points the story's narrator does not seem aware of the obvious cultural ironies that Mrs. Spring Fragrance's character raises. For instance, the title character is apparently serious in her use of the verse from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memorium" as her refrain throughout — "'It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.'" Both Mrs. and Mr. Spring Fragrance call Tennyson "an American poet." Sui Sin Far, reared on British literature when Tennyson was laureate, certainly knew the difference, however, and could be suggesting, satirically, that to her fictional couple — as white Americans say about Chinese in both the United States and China— poets in the United States and England all sound the same. As Ammons observes, "She is forcing us to think about American literature and sentimentality from a place outside white western consciousness." Comments such as Mr. Spring Fragrance's "'American poetry is detestable, abhorrible!'" certainly recall Sui Sin Far's satiric treatment of romantic fiction in "Albemarle's Secret." But the reader is given no guide to such irony; the narrator neither corrects nor comments on the Spring Fragrance's erroneous reference to Tennyson as "an American poet."

There are other problems with the Mrs. Spring Fragrance stories. Complex and timely questions that these texts as a whole raise— How does one deal with cultural obedience, filial piety, respect for old customs in this new environment? How does a woman's freedom to do low-paying secretarial labor for a man really speak to problems of class or to the tenets of woman suffrage?— are resolved simplistically. Mr. Chin Yuen readily accepts the "new order," and Mary Carson readily accepts the "inferior woman." Both involve changes in their basic cultural assumptions about marriage and class that take place during a few minutes' chat, which violates the reader's sense of believability. "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" and "The Inferior Woman" solve the problems of living on intercultural borders too easily. They turn comic and cute, and the examination of important issues they open fades back into silence. Is Sui Sin Far caricaturing this "quaint, dainty" woman and the fantasy world she manipulates? Or is she presenting the character she created— one like her authorial self in many ways—as a serious model for negotiating the cultural borders faced by her Chinese American and female characters?. . .

Source: Annette White-Parks, in her *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography,* University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 164-69.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Ling discusses Sui Sin Far's fiction and her primacy in representing the concerns of Asian-American women at the turn of the century.

The personal story of what life was like for the Chinese and Eurasians in America at the turn of the century is Sui Sin Far's special contribution to American letters, for she was the first person of any Chinese ancestry to take up this subject. And she took up the subject as a woman warrior takes up her sword: to right/write wrongs and to uplift the downtrodden. Her major purpose in writing was to right wrongs done the Chinese in America, but her minor themes were to give credit due to working class women and to acknowledge the strength of the bond between women.

Sui Sin Far, translated literally, is "water fragrant flower," or narcissus; also called Chinese lily. A story that appeared in the September 19, 1891 issue of the *Dominion Illustrated* may be the origin of Edith's choice of a pseudonym. The legend of the Chinese lily appeared in an article, "Episodes of Chinese Life in British Columbia," by James P. MacIntyre.

It is said a farmer left half each of his estate to two sons, the eldest receiving good land in which he planted tea, and prospered; the younger son having only land of a swampy character, nothing would grow in it, and he was sorely moved to grief. But a white elephant presented him with a bulbous root which he placed in water and the result was, through time, grief changed to joy and a paradise of flowers. Through the outcome of this incident which brought him great wealth, he became a mandarin, and attained to the third degree of state in the kingdom, the Emperor planting the yellow flag with golden dragon on his horse.

Certainly, the transformation of grief into joy, handicap into glory, failure into success would have appealed to Edith Eaton, who, "carried the burden of the Eurasian" upon her slight shoulders throughout her life. Great, too, was the appeal of the humble beauty of these small bulbs that needed only a shallow bowl of water and rewarded little effort with a cluster of highly perfumed, modest white flowers, becoming in the dead of winter a symbol of the persistence of life and beauty, and a particular favorite in Chinese homes.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance, her collected stories, is an attractive book. Its vermillion cover is embossed in gold letters and decorated with lotus flowers, a dragonfly and the moon. Like Winnifred's novels, which had appeared before this, the physical appearance of the book attests to the publisher's attempt to promote sales by appealing to a particular notion of things "oriental" as exotic, delicate, and lovely. The book is printed on decorated paper, each page imprinted in a pastel "oriental" design: a crested bird on branches of plum blossoms and bamboo with the Chinese characters for Happiness, Prosperity, and Longevity vertically descending along the right margin. Some of Sui Sin Far's stories are appropriately delicate, charming, and lovely; however, the more serious

ones strike ironic, tragic, and even somewhat bitter notes very much at odds with their physical presentation. The medium and the message thus engage in a tug of war.

The reviews for *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* were generally favorable, with the progressive New York *Independent* praising the book thus:

The conflict between occidental and oriental ideals and the hardships of American immigration laws furnish the theme for most of the tales and the reader is not only interested but has his mind widened by becoming acquainted with novel points of view.

Though *The New York Times* recognized that "Miss Eaton has struck a new note in American fiction," its reviewer did not think that she had "struck it very surely, or with surpassing skill." But he did recognize that "it has taken courage to strike it at all." This reviewer goes on to elucidate her purpose and makes a puzzling judgment on her task:

The thing she has tried to do is to portray for readers of the white race the lives, feelings, sentiments of the Americanized Chinese on the Pacific coast, of those who have intermarried with them, and of the children who have sprung from such unions. It is a task whose adequate doing would require well-nigh superhuman insight and the subtlest of methods.

Why should it be a "superhuman" task to render the Chinese understandably human to white readers? Is it because the Chinese are so far from being human or that white readers are so far from being willing to accept them as such?

In some of the stories . . . she has seen far and deep, and has made her account keenly interesting. Especially is this true of the analysis she makes occasionally of the character of an Americanized Chinese, of the glimpses of the Chinese women who refuse to be anything but intensely Chinese, and into the characters of the half-breed children.

In style and tone, Sui Sin Far's stories, like her characters, are unpretentious, gentle, sometimes sentimental. Like other late nineteenth century American women writers, she also wrote stories for children, which make up nearly half of this collection. Through basic human themes— love of men and women, parents and children, brothers and sisters, she draws forth the reader's empathy. What sets her stories apart is her sympathetic portrayal of the Chinese characters living in the United States. Bret Harte had used Chinese characters in his Western stories, but he always presented them from the white man's perspective. Sui Sin Far gave to American letters the Chinese perspective on racial prejudice, economic harassment, and discriminatory immigration regulations. A strident or militant tone was hardly necessary, for she had only to show the situation as it was for the injustice to be apparent; instead, she employed irony.

One of the best examples of Sui Sin Far's ironic tone may be found in the title story of the collection. Lively, unconventional Mrs. Spring Fragrance, while visiting in San Francisco, writes a letter home to her husband in Seattle after attending a "magniloquent lecture" entitled "America the Protector of China" to which a white friend had taken her:

It was most exhilarating, and the effect of so much expression of benevolence leads me to beg of you to forget to remember that the barber charges you one dollar for a shave while he humbly submits to the American man a bill of fifteen cents. And murmur no more because your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the roof-tree of this great Government instead of under your own humble roof. Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty. What is the loss of ten hundred years or ten thousand times ten dollars compared with the happiness of knowing oneself so securely sheltered? All of this I have learned from Mrs. Samuel Smith, who is as brilliant and great of mind as one of your own superior sex.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance first reaches out a sympathetic hand to her husband, who would immediately understand the emptiness of the patriotic rhetoric, given the prejudicial treatment he has received from his barber and the indignities his brother has suffered at the hands of immigration officials. Then she uses this opportunity to her own advantage by drawing a parallel between her well-meaning but misguided friend, who thought she would find this lecture edifying, and her self-righteous husband, who is always critical of her actions. In other words, racism and sexism are rooted in the same error: the belief that one is innately superior to another. As a Chinese American woman, Mrs. Spring Fragrance must endure the superior attitudes of both white people and of Chinese American men. Though thinly veiled in apparent good humor, the ironic force of this passage, with its double-pronged attack, is strong and uncompromising, and the barb at the end unexpected.

Humor is another of Sui Sin Far's weapons, as in the following exclamations by Mrs. Spring Fragrance to her husband, when their Caucasian neighbor's lovelorn son fails to give them his usual greeting: "Ah, these Americans! These mysterious, inscrutable, incomprehensible Americans! Had I the divine right of learning I would put them into an immortal book." Sui Sin Far is obviously taking delight in the inversion of her Chinese character's appropriating the adjectives commonly used to describe "Orientals" and applying them to whites. The author is also commenting subtly on the supposed superiority— "the divine right of learning" — of those who pass such judgments on other people; the implication here is that the Chinese are not "inscrutable" because of qualities inherent in themselves but because of blind spots in those doing the scrutinizing. Furthermore, Sui Sin Far is taking delight in inverting the character/reader relationship, for a character, who has been made most scrutable, is expressing a desire to write a book about the "inscrutable" white Americans, the reader. We are all comprehensible, of course, to ourselves; it is only the other who is incomprehensible.

Sui Sin Far attempted to reproduce the speech rhythms and patterns of ordinary Chinese Americans in her stories. But her use of literal translations from the Chinese— as in proper names, honorific titles, and axioms— results in a flowery, exotic language somewhat at odds with her purpose of rendering the Chinese familiar to whites, as in the title of the book and in this letter from Mrs. Spring Fragrance to her protege:

My Precious Laura,— May the bamboo ever wave. Next week I accompany Ah Oi to the beauteous town of San Jose. There we will be met by the son of the Illustrious Teacher,

and, in a little Mission, presided over by the benevolent American priest, the little Ah Oi and the son of the Illustrious Teacher will be joined together in love and harmony— two pieces of music made to complete each other.

At other times, the syntax more realistically reproduces Chinese English, as when Lae Choo urges the white lawyer to go to Washington to procure the papers releasing her toddler son from immigration authorities in "In the Land of the Free":

"Then you go get paper. If Hom Hing not can give you five hundred dollars — I give you perhaps what more that much."

Though Edith Eaton's linguistic portraits may seem at times quaint or strained, her purpose is unfailing: to dramatize the humanness of the Chinese, to draw the reader into their lives, their tragedies, their triumphs. As critic Florence Howe recently noted in a different context, "their view is generic not individualistic; their ideology is explicit"; so is Sui Sin Far's work also the "literature of social documentary— and unabashedly partisan." Her fiction is comparable to the early stories by Black women, which Carole McAlpine Watson described as "purpose fiction . . . [employing] moral suasion . . . as a conscious strategy of racial self-defense."

Watson's description of the fiction of late nineteenth century Black American women writers, in fact, can very easily be applied to the fiction and purpose of Sui Sin Far:

. . . black women novelists, beginning in the 1890s, produced works of social protest and racial appeal based upon Christian and democratic principles. During the final decade of the nineteenth century, their stories challenged the social order then being established in portrayals that refuted the black stereotype, exposed injustice in both the North and South, and, in curious tales about tragic mulattoes, focused attention on the irony and irrationality of the color line.

Sui Sin Far faced with the same irrational color line also wrote stories about mulattoes or Eurasians, who were not only victims of racial discrimination but were figures "with whom white readers could identify." In such stories as "Its Wavering Image," in which a Eurasian, living in Chinatown with her Chinese father, finds her trust betrayed by a white newspaper reporter, and "The Story of a White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and "Her Chinese Husband." Sui Sin Far is highly successful in personifying and personalizing her cause by embodying it in characters caught in the between-world condition. These characters may be Eurasians wavering between the cultures and peoples of their parents; whites adopted by or married to Chinese; or Chinese who have assimilated Western ways but still are tied by Old World bonds.

In "The Wisdom of the New," tragedy results when an Americanized Chinese immigrant, Wou Sankwei, does not realize the extent of his Chinese wife's fear of American ways. Pau Lin, the wife, a Chinese villager suddenly brought to America by a husband she has not seen in seven years, is unhinged by jealousy and culture shock and comes to believe, literally, that the Americanization of their son is a fate worse than death. The night before the boy is to start American school, the mother kills him to save him from

impending doom. To his credit, the husband, Wou Sankwei, shows great solicitation for his deranged wife and takes her back to China. Sui Sin Far maintains a balanced perspective in the narration of this story, neither condemning the husband for insensitivity nor the wife for rigidity. Instead, her purpose is to show the tragedy of being between worlds. As Wou Sankwei's American friends observe,

"Yes, I admit Sankwei has some puzzles to solve. Naturally, when he tries to live two lives— that of a Chinese and that of an American."

"Is it not what we teach these Chinese boys — to become Americans? And yet, they are Chinese, and must, in a sense, remain so."

Nor can the blame of the tragedy be laid at the feet of these kind white women who helped a Chinese student adjust to American life. The fault lies in the situation itself, in the clash between cultures and the fragility of the people caught in this clash.

In "Pat and Pan," a white orphan boy, reared by a Chinese family until the intervention of a white missionary, learns, after spending some time with whites, to be contemptuous of his Chinese family. In the "Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and its sequel, "Her Chinese Husband," Eaton writes a moving tale of an interracial marriage from the perspective of a white woman. Abandoned by her first husband, a Caucasian, who found her too unsophisticated in politics and, ironically, too ignorant of women's rights to hold his interest, a white woman eventually marries the Chinese man who rescued her from an attempted suicide and gave her a means of employment. For herself, she does not mind the contempt of other whites, but she does worry about the future of their little son in a racially biased world:

. . . as he stands between his father and myself, like yet unlike us both, so will he stand in after years between his father's and his mother's people. And if there is no kindliness nor understanding between them, what will my boy's fate be?

Undoubtedly, Edith Eaton is here writing out of a deeply felt personal experience. She expressed the same anxiety in her autobiographical essay by concluding it with these words:

After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is more than nationality. . . . I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant "connecting link."

In "Her Chinese Husband," the white wife gives a fuller picture of her Chinese husband and of the life she led with him. On finding her weeping over the future of their child, her husband asks her pointedly:

What is there to weep about? The child is beautiful: the feeling heart, the understanding mind is his. And we will bring him up to be proud that he is of Chinese blood; he will fear none and, after him, the name of half-breed will no longer be one of contempt.

But the father with these idealistic visions is brought home one night with a bullet through his head and, in his pockets are the presents his children had requested: two red rubber balls, an image with undeniable sexual implications. Since race was the only motivation for the murder, the story would seem to indicate a despair at society's ever arriving at a time when different races can live in mutual respect. However, the very writing of the story itself moves us in that direction.

In addition to her major cause— rendering the Chinese human— Sui Sin Far's stories plead two additional causes: acceptance of the working class woman and of friendship between women. In "The Inferior Woman" her sympathy lies with the hardworking, self-made woman as opposed to the wealthy, privileged suffragette. Alice Winthrop, who began working at the age of 14 as an "office boy" in a law office and is now private secretary to the most influential man in Washington, is at first rejected by the mother of the man she loves and called the "inferior woman" because of her family's poverty. She is given her rightful due, however, when her more privileged but generous friend says of her:

It is women such as Alice Winthrop who, in spite of every drawback, have raised themselves to the level of those who have had every advantage, who are the pride and glory of America. There are thousands of them, all over this land: women who have been of service to others all their years and who have graduated from the university of life with honor. Women such as I, who are called the Superior Women of America, are after all nothing but schoolgirls in comparison.

This story courageously criticizes the Suffragettes for class discrimination, and praises the self-made working-class woman.

Of friendship between women, Sui Sin Far wrote explicitly in several stories in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* In "The Inferior Woman," it is the "superior woman," the well-educated, upper-class Ethel Evebrook, who recognizes the actual superiority of the so-called "inferior woman," as demonstrated in the quote above. In a story called "The Chinese Lily," a character transparently named Sin Far sacrifices her life for another woman, a cripple. The cripple, Mermei, had been used to evening visits from her brother. When he fails to come one evening, Sin Far, her neighbor, pays her a visit which both enjoy immensely. Comparing this visit to those from her brother, Mermei concludes, "Lin John is dear, but one can't talk to a man, even if he is a brother, as one can to one the same as oneself," To which Sin Far replies, "Yes, indeed. The woman must be the friend of the woman, and the man the friend of the man." One night a fire breaks out in the rooming house; the brother arrives in time to save only one person. Though he has fallen in love with Sin Far, at her request, Lin John saves his sister, and Sin Far perishes in the flames.

Here we find not only the woman-bonding theme, but the ideal of self-sacrifice, or martyrdom, as the ultimate expression of love. Using the transparent non-artifice of her own name, Sui Sin Far declares her willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for others. In "Leaves" she had revealed a childhood Joan-of-Arc fantasy that foreshadows the theme of this story: "I dream dreams of being great and noble . . . I glory in the idea

of dying at the stake and a great genie arising from the flames and declaring to those who have scorned us: 'Behold, how great and glorious and noble are the Chinese people!'. On another level, since Edith Eaton herself had a limp and was sickly throughout her life, the two characters may be a doubling of herself, with Sin Far, her active assertive self, coming to the rescue of *Mermei,* (little sister in Chinese) her weak victimized self. What is sacrificed, then, is sexual love embodied in the person of Lin John.

"The Heart's Desire" is a parable about a Chinese princess surrounded by all that wealth and tender care can provide her but who is nonetheless unhappy. Her attendants attempt to cheer her by bringing her successively a father, a mother, and a brother, but all fail to make her happy. The princess then takes the matter into her own hands and sends a note to a poor girl who lives outside the palace walls. When this girl arrives, the princess announces to all the palace: "Behold, I have found my heart's desire— a little sister" And the two girls "forever after . . . lived happily together in a glad, beautiful old palace, surrounded by a glad, beautiful old garden, on a charming little island in the middle of a lake." The tale has a symmetrical shape since the ending is identical to a sentence in the opening paragraph, with the exception of one significant change, the replacement of the word *sad* by *glad.* However, the language of the conventional fairy tale ending is so little changed as to draw attention to the bold inversion of this tale's ending. This princess does not ride off to live happily ever after with a handsome prince, but finds her "heart's desire" and life-long happiness in a relationship with "another like herself."

In an early essay, "Spring Impressions: A Medley of Poetry and Prose" in the June 7, 1890 issue of *Dominion Illustrated* Edith Eaton announced her chosen career, for "the communicativeness of our nature will no longer be repressed" and set forth her causes as a writer:

We can suffer with those who have suffered wrongs, we can weep for those whose hearts unnoticed broke amidst this world's great traffic; we can mourn for those whom the grave hath robbed of all that was dear to them, and can sympathize with those remorse-tortured ones, who, gifted with utmost divine wisdom, yet wilfully turned from the guiding light and with eyes that saw all the horror and shame before them walked into the arms of sin.

Her Christian upbringing is apparent in the rhetoric: "divine wisdom," "guiding light," "arms of sin." She would be the great empathizer, and she did indeed make it her life's work to "suffer with those who have suffered wrongs." But perhaps part of her empathy and melancholy had roots in a deep sense of guilt over what she may have perceived as her own sexual deviance. It is pure speculation on my part, but "Heart's Desire" and "The Chinese Lily" are suggestive of a lesbian sensibility, which the author herself would not have approved and would have striven to repress.

Sui Sin Far's major theme, of course, was the plight of the Chinese in America. The full extent of her accomplishment in this area stands out when contrasted to contemporaneous works about the Chinese in the so-called Chinatown fiction written by

Caucasian authors, examined ably and thoroughly by William Wu in *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982). That so many negative images of the Chinese appeared in white American writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Wu traces to the European memory of Mongol invasions and the subsequent fear of history repeating itself in the New World. This fear gave rise to the stereotypes of Chinese as opium addicts, prostitutes, cheaters, cleaver wielders, and clever villains. Even the sympathetic white writer "envisions the Chinese as subhuman pets incapable of morality until they are converted into the Christianity of the West."

Such missionary zeal is much in evidence in Helen Clark's *The Lady of the Lily Feet and Other Tales of Chinatown* (Philadelphia: Griffth and Rowland Press under the imprint of the American Baptist Publication Society, 1900). Published a dozen years before *Mrs. Spring Fragrance,* Clark's book was a collection of short stories focused entirely on the atrocities of foot-binding, wife beating and selling, the literal enslavement of Chinese women by their men, showing the Chinese to be in desperate need of Christian salvation. The characters are flat, the plots repetitious, the author's perspective outside of and obviously superior to the Chinese community. Christian zeal so overrides artistry that finally only the rare photographs of nineteenth century Chinese women and children in their elaborate Manchu clothing and formal poses remain as the most interesting aspect of the book.

Though the plight of some Chinese women was a cause comparable to Negro slavery, an entire book focused exclusively on the peculiar, horrifying aspects of Chinese culture would give readers additional proof of the "heathenness" of the Chinese, serving to increase the rift between the two races. By contrast, Sui Sin Far, with her stories of ordinary family life, of love triumphing over or thwarted by obstacles, of characters with three-dimensional depth, did much more to bridge the gap between Chinese and whites.

Finally, Edith Eaton fully recognized the pioneer quality of her work and accepted the fact that as a bridge between two worlds, she had to expect to be stepped on. Martyrdom, as she expressed in her stories "A Chinese Lily" and "The Smuggling of Tie Co," and as Jane Tompkins explained in her analysis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* is a strategy of the powerless. The major purpose of both Sui Sin Far's life and her writing may be summed up in this passage from "Leaves":

Only when the whole world becomes as one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly. I believe that some day a great part of the world will be Eurasian. I cheer myself with the thought that I am but a pioneer. A pioneer should glory in suffering. . . .

Source: Amy Ling, in her *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry,* Pergamon Press, 1990, pp. 40-49.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Solberg traces Far's writing career, paying particular attention to her status as a Chinese-European writer.

Both her photographs and her own testimony seem to indicate that Edith Maud Eaton (1867-1914) could have "passed" into the majority society with little trouble. Moreover, although her mother was Chinese, Edith was unacquainted with her mother's native language, except for a few phrases, during her early years; in fact, she had very little contact with Asians or Eurasians, except for her own large group of siblings. Yet when she began to publish stories and articles, she chose to write chiefly about China and Chinese-Americans, and she wrote under the *nom de plume* of Sui Sin Far (occasionally Sui Seen or Sin Fah). . . .

William Purviance Fenn, in a basic study of attitudes towards Chinese in American literature, suggested that [attitudes towards the Chinese in America] might be summed up in four periods, the first three falling into what he somewhat wryly labeled the era of the "Chinese 'Invasion'" — "1) that of toleration, from 1849 to 1853; 2) that of growing antagonism, from 1853 to 1882; and 3) that of restriction, from 1882 on." The San Francisco fire of 1906 marked the end of that "era," he says, and "the Chinese question dropped into discard as a real issue, making way . . . for the Japanese question of more recent times."

In terms of that periodization, Edith succeeded during the time of restriction in having five publications, one of them in the prestigious *Century* magazine. She had no model to follow; the public taste was for the exotic or for the stereotype. The "funny people" who wanted her to trade on her nationality told her:

if I wanted to succeed in literature in America I should dress in Chinese costume, carry a fan in my hand, wear a pair of scarlet beaded slippers, live in New York, and come of high birth.

Not only did she repudiate all this; she saw it as ineffectual. She knew that Americans definitely preferred Japanese to Chinese:

The Americans having for many years manifested a much higher regard for the Japanese than the Chinese, several half-Chinese young men and women, thinking to advance themselves, both in a social and business sense, pass as Japanese. They continue to be known as Eurasian, but a Japanese Eurasian does not appear in the same light as a Chinese Eurasian.

Immediately after this she adds:

The unfortunate Chinese Eurasians! Are not those who compel them to thus cringe more to be blamed than they?

The question of choice, of being true to one's heritage and family, of selling a birthright for momentary peace in an uncomfortable society are the same questions that have plagued Asian-American writers down to the present.

Further comprehension of her situation, as a Chinese person as well as a writer, can be found in American cultural history and in mainstream literature of her time. Howard Mumford Jones, in an extended discussion of the taste for the exotic in what he calls the "cosmopolitan spirit," makes the provocative suggestion that while the American response to Japan was derived from a taste for the exotic the same was not true of China. "American taste for Chinoiserie descends from the eighteenth century, and aside from vulgar notions about Chinese sexuality, joss houses, and opium dens, it is problematical whether things Chinese served greatly to quench any thirst for the exotic." While the reasons for this are no doubt complex, central to them would seem to be the simple fact that the Chinese were already present in the United States and most of the popular images derived from that direct contact. The Japanese had, for the most part, the added attraction of being across the Pacific without much danger of the facts of their presence damaging whatever fantasies might be evoked.

While this contrast could be illustrated from many sources, it is suggested in even the works of those great champions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, Jack London and Frank Norris. Note, for example, London's description of Captain West in *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* as a "samurai," or the evocation of a remembered woman in *Martin Eden:* "Japanese women, doll-like, stepping mincingly on wooden clogs" as contrasted with his treatment of the Chinese in the short story "Yellow Handkerchief": "What was to happen next I could not imagine, for the Chinese were a different race from mine, and from what I knew I was confident that fair play was no part of their make-up" or, further on, "I was familiar enough with the Chinese character to know that fear alone restrained them."

Frank Norris, in describing Vanamee's vision in *The Octopus,* has the spectre "dressed in a gown of scarlet silk, with flowing sleeves, such as Japanese wear, embroidered with flowers and figures of birds worked in gold threads," while in *Moran of the Lady Letty,* the Chinese crew of the *Bertha Millner* is described in these terms: "the absolute indifference of these brown-suited Mongols, the blankness of their flat, fat faces, the dullness of their slanting, fishlike eyes that never met his own or even wandered in his direction was uncanny, disquieting."

A general pattern had been established, much as in these examples, of the Chinese as mysterious, evil, nearby, and threatening, while the Japanese were exotic, quaint, delicate (or manly, as the samurai), and distant. A verbal equivalent appears in a curious article in the *Bookman* in 1923, entitled "Chinese Characters in American Fiction": "The Chinese resent the popular term *Chinaman.* They prefer to be referred to as *Chinese,* just as natives of Japan are termed *Japanese.* Would anyone ever use the expression Japanman?" While this is not the place to go into the specific stereotypes of Japanese and Chinese that existed at the turn of the century, it is necessary to note the curious way in which the general fascination with the exotic (Japan) was able to transcend racist ideas so long as distance was a part of the formula.

As a Chinese-American writer, then, Far had to find a mode that would enable her to deal with her own experience (as the classic editorial injunction has it), but to do that meant to fall outside the boundaries of any of the "maincurrents" of American writing. She was not a regionalist nor nationalist. If anything, she was an internationalist, but hardly of the Henry James school, though some of what is interesting in her work lies in the subtleties that are apt to be lost on the untrained casual reader. She is not naturalist or local colorist, and her essays at humor, which tend to fall short of the mark in any case, can hardly be looked upon as falling in the Mr. Dooley or Mark Twain "native American" styles. She was trapped by experience and inclination into working within a sub-genre of American prose: what, for lack of a better term, we might call Chinatown Tales. Such classification by subject matter (Chinatown, or more broadly, the Chinese in America) breaks down an established literary form, the novel, into sub-genres defined by content, not form or stylistic skill. Eaton, by choosing to identify with and write about the Chinese, found herself alone in an essentially formless field. There had been fifty years of writing about the Chinese in America, but out of that writing no clear literary form had evolved. As William Purviance Fenn sums it up:

The impress of Chinese immigration on American literature . . . is hard to evaluate. . . . Its influence has been two-fold: first, as a problem the discussion of which has resulted in literature; second, as a source of subject matter for the literature of local color. In the first place, the half century of economic and political discussion resulted in an immense amount of material which is still preserved for us in newspaper, magazine, pamphlet, and book. Of this, a larger proportion, of course, is of value only to the economist, historian, or sociologist; but the heated emotions of that struggle occasionally found expression in fiction, drama, and verse. Party prejudices and passions, however, are poor inspiration for anything but cheap propaganda, and it is in the appeal of the subject to the sense of justice that we have an approach to the fundamental inspirational problems of literature.

In the second place, the existence of a large number of this alien race offered an unusual opportunity for devotees of the local-color movement; and in the glorious process of exploding old myths and of creating new ones, the Chinamen were bound to suffer in many a poem, story, and play. . . . They were strange and they were enigmatical; their appearance and ways added color to already too colorful backgrounds, and the difficulty of understanding them piqued the curiosity of American readers. The result was a body of fiction, drama, and verse exploiting the Chinese as a rich source of local color.

But even of this small body of creative literature, by far the greater part was written by amateurs in the field of letters, and only a handful of efforts even approach greatness.

Fiction, drama, and verse, each with a sub-genre which exploits the "Chinese as a rich source of color." This gave Eaton little enough to build on, for her intent was certainly not to exploit, but rather to record, explain, and somehow give meaning to the experience of the Chinese in America. Fenn's 1933 summing up is interesting, for he

had considered two of Eaton's stories in his summary, though his bibliography does not list her collection, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.*

Such, then, is the literature of Chinatown— no poems, no plays, but possibly half a dozen short stories worth remembering. And Chinatown will never be adequately described by anyone who fails to see in it something more fundamental than the superficial barbarity and high coloring which have been almost the only appeal so far. . . . The real Chinatown that is worth preserving lies beneath the surface color, among the deeper currents.

I would argue that Edith Eaton as Sui Sin Far did manage to dip into those deeper currents beneath the surface color, but no matter what she saw and understood, there was no acceptable form to shape it to. Had she been physically stronger and had a more sophisticated literary apprenticeship, she might have been able to create that new form. As it was, she was defeated, for in that "glorious process of exploding old myths and of creating new ones," as Fenn puts it, "the Chinamen were bound to suffer."

Fictional stereotypes for the Chinatown tales had been established, and it was difficult for anyone, even of a strongly independent mind, to ignore them. No matter how frank and open Eaton might have been in a memoir such as "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," when she turned her hand to fiction the possible was limited by the acceptable. She was modest about her work. In acknowledging permissions to reprint previously published stories in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* she writes: "I wish to thank the Editors . . . who were kind enough to care for my children when I sent them out into the world, for permitting the dear ones to return to me to be grouped together within this volume.

Even at the outset there were those who appreciated her difficulties and her attempts to create authentic characters. Said the editor of *Land of Sunshine,* a California magazine, in 1887:

[Her stories are] all of Chinese characters in California or on the Pacific Coast; and they have an insight and sympathy which are probably unique. To others the alien Celestial is at best mere "literary material": in these stories, he (or she) is a human being.

That her contemporaries saw Sui Sin Far's writing as an attempt to speak for Chinese-Americans is borne out by the review of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*

Miss Eaton has struck a new note in American fiction. She has not struck it very surely, or with surpassing skill, but it has taken courage to strike it all, and, to some extent, she atones for lack of artistic skill with the unusual knowledge she undoubtedly has of her theme. The thing she has tried to do is to portray for readers of the white race the lives, feelings, sentiments of the Americanized Chinese of the Pacific Coast, of those who have intermarried with them and of the children who have sprung from such unions. It is a task whose adequate doing would require well nigh superhuman insight and the subtlest of methods.

The review had more insight that the publisher who inserted an advertisement on the same page; the advertisement reads in part: "Quaint, lovable characters are the Chinese who appear in these unusual and exquisite stories of our Western Coast. . . . Altogether they make as desirable reading as the title suggests." Taken out of context,

what does the title suggest? Perhaps the exotic, that could be traded on, at worst, the quaint, but hardly the struggle toward realism that is found in the pages.

The title story of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* deals with the difficulties of Mr. Spring Fragrance in understanding and coming to grips with his very Americanized wife. While the story is slight, it does allow Eaton to create passages such as the following exchange between Mr. Spring Fragrance and an American friend:

"Everything is 'high class" in America," he [Mr. Spring Fragrance] observed.

"Sure!" cheerfully assented the young man. "Haven't you ever heard that all Americans are princes and princesses, and just as soon as a foreigner puts his foot upon our shores, he also becomes of the nobility— I mean, the royal family."

"What about my brother in the Detention Pen?" dryly inquired Mr. Spring Fragrance.

"Now, you've got me," said the young man, rubbing his head. "Well, that is a shame — 'a beastly shame,' as the Englishman says. But understand, old fellow, we that are real Americans are up against that— even more than you. It is against our principles."

"I offer the real Americans my consolations that they should be compelled to do that which is against their principles."

In the story "The Inferior Woman" an interesting possibility is suggested, then dropped. But the suggestion shows that Eaton knew what she was up against and was somehow trying to warn her readers. The story describes Mrs. Spring Fragrance's interference in the love life of her American neighbor's son, and she helps him to marry the "inferior woman" he prefers rather than the "superior woman" chosen by his mother. As the story opens, Mrs. Spring Fragrance is walking in the garden reflecting upon the possibilities of "a book which she had some notion of writing. Many American women wrote books. Why should not a Chinese? She would write a book about Americans for her Chinese women friends. The American people were so interesting and mysterious." Unfortunately Mrs. Spring Fragrance never writes her book, and we never see her develop the stereotypes of the "mysterious Americans."

"Particularly interesting," says the *New York Times* reviewer, "are two stories in which an American woman is made to contrast her experiences as the wife of an American and afterward of a Chinese." In 1952 the same stories caught the attention of John Burt Foster, and impressed him so much that he speculated: "So intimately does the author write of mixed marriage that one is tempted to believe that she herself married a Chinese and was enabled in this way to get firsthand information."

Yet despite the fascination of many of the stories and their subjects the problems with Angel Island, the self-protective aspects of the Chinese community, the Eurasians who in the crunch throw in their lot with the Chinese— the most impressive aspect of the writing is the conviction that environment is more important than heredity, that race is an accident, and, when, as with the Eurasian, there is a question of choice, the individual has the power to make that choice.

The most dramatic statement of the theme of choice is in "Pat and Pan," the story of two children, the boy Caucasian-American, the girl Chinese-American, being raised together in a Chinese household; the Chinese couple has raised the boy from a baby as their own. He speaks only Chinese, has only Chinese playmates, is inseparable from his little "Chinese" sister. Enter the meddling mission school teacher who cannot allow a "white boy" to be brought up Chinese. The child is removed from his Chinese home and adopted by a white family. Slowly he grows away from his Chinese background. On his next meeting his little Chinese sister, he is friendly, but in their second encounter after their separation, egged on by his new playmates, he rejects her completely, shouting at her to get away from him. "But when she reached the foot of the hill, she looked up and shook her little head sorrowfully. 'Poor Pat!' said she. 'He Chinese no more; he Chinese no more!"

While Eaton wrote well, she never acquired the control of style necessary to deal with her subjects in depth or at length. What she wrote were chiefly sketches, vignettes. The task she had set herself was nearly impossible at that time. Trapped in the stylistic conventions of the time, including dialogue in a forced and artificial dialect, she could only try, by selection of her story material, to tell about the real Chinese-Americans she knew. . . .

What she left was a unique public record of the difficulty of being an individual without racial, national, or group claims. "After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any," she wrote. "Individuality is more than nationality. 'You are you and I am I,' says Confucius." And then she

goes on to the bitter heart of her dilemma. "I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant 'connecting link.' And that's all."

Source: S. E. Solberg, "Sui Sin Far/Edith Eaton: First Chinese-American Fictionist," in *MELUS,* Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring, 1981, pp. 27-39.

Topics for Further Study

Investigate discrimination against Chinese immigrants to the United States in the early twentieth century, and select two or three factors that express American discrimination against the immigrants. Considering this environment, select two stories other than "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" from Far's collection and discuss the ways she may be critiquing American treatment of Chinese Americans.

Do some research about Chinatown. Besides San Francisco and New York, what are some other cities that have Chinatowns? Given that laws restricting Asians are not as oppressive as they were a hundred years ago, why do you think Chinatowns still thrive? What other ethnic groups have "towns" of their own; what groups do not?

Find out about some cultures that still practice arranged marriages. How do these marriages usually turn out? How do the bride and groom feel about the situation? What might be some of the benefits of such an arrangement? What might some drawbacks be?

Think of a contemporary or historical event where groups of people have been oppressed or killed because of their race or political affiliations. How have these groups enacted resistance? Is literature an effective way to challenge oppressive political systems?

Compare and Contrast

1852: 195 Chinese contract laborers are sent to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations. Over 20,000 Chinese live in California; many of them have immigrated to work in gold mines. California is commonly referred to by the Chinese as the "Gold Mountain."

1982: A Chinese American named Vincent Chin is beaten death in Detroit for being "Japanese."

1907: The "Gentleman's Agreement" is formed between the United States and Japan and prohibits the entry of Japanese into America.

1987: The U.S. House of Representative votes to make an official apology to Japanese Americans and their families affected by the World War II internment. Plans are made to pay each surviving internee $20,000. The action is supported by the Senate in 1987, and by President George Bush in 1989.

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act is passed. Terms of the law effectively prohibit entry of Chinese immigrants into the United States for 10 years. In 1892, Chinese immigration is barred for another 10 years as Geary Law renews terms of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

1997: The University of Pennsylvania proposes the Minority Permanence Act, deeming certain minority groups as "over-represented." If the act passes, Asian Americans will no longer be considered as minority groups in admissions procedures. This adversely affects Southeast Asian immigrants and other new Asian immigrant groups who may not have the economic and educational advantage of the larger Asian subgroups (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) that have been in the country longer.

What Do I Read Next?

Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian (1909) by Sui Sin Far is the author's memoir of growing up in Canada and the United States as a half-Chinese and half-British woman.

Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings (1995) edited by Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks. The most comprehensive collection of Sui Sin Far's written works, including her early newspaper articles, to date.

Tama by Onoto Watanna. A romance about an American professor who travels to the Japanese countryside and meets Tama, a half-Japanese, half-American woman who is blind. Tama has been rejected by the people of her village for her odd appearance and is considered an evil "fox-woman" until the American professor teaches them otherwise.

Asian Americans: An Interpretive History (1991) by Sucheng Chan. A historical account of how Asian immigrants in the United States were *really* treated. Chan brings to the forefront the discrimination and legalized racism against Asian Americans that frequently is omitted from American history books.

The Joy Luck Club (1989) by Amy Tan. Four American-born women of Chinese immigrants try to bridge the cultural differences between themselves and their mothers, who met during the Japanese occupation of China during World War II.

Nisei Daughter by (1953) Monica Sone. A Japanese American woman's account of life in United States in the years surrounding World War II. Sone discusses the outrage of the internment of all Japanese in America, particularly the *nisei,* meaning "second generation," who were born in America and were legal American citizens.

The Woman Warrior (1975) by Maxine Hong Kingston. Kingston's fictionalized autobiography explores her complicated position as a Chinese American born in the United States. She explores her alienation as a young girl trapped between Chinese and American cultures, neither of which she belongs to fully.

Clay Walls (1987) by Ronyoung Kim. The story of a young Korean-American woman whose impoverished immigrant life contrasts sharply to the life of wealth and leisure she led in Korea. It is set in the first two decades of this century, when many Koreans were fleeing persecution from Imperial Japan and immigrating to the United States.

Charlie Chan Is Dead, edited by Jessica Hagedorn. An anthology of recent Asian-American short stories exploring the racism, oppression, and alienation that Asian Americans still face today.

Further Study

Ammons, Elizabeth. "Audacious Words: Sui Sin Far's Mrs. Spring Fragrance," from *Conflicting Stories.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Feminist reading of Sui Sin Far's collected short stories.

Chang, Yoonmee. *Tama On-line* http:// www.english.upenn.edu/~yoonmeec.

An online "reversion" of Onoto Watanna's *Tama.* Includes biography of Watanna and Sui Sin Far. This project is still in development.

Ling, Amy. "Writers with a Cause: Sui Sin Far and Han Suyin," from *Women's Studies International Forum,* Vol. 9 (1986): 411-419.

Revisionist historical of Sui Sin Far's and Korean writer Han Suyin.

Ling, Amy. "Edith Eaton: Pioneer Chinamerican Writer and Feminist," in *American Literary Realism,* Vol. 16, Autumn, 1983, pp. 287-98.

Discussion of Sui Sin Far as the first Chinese-American writer.

Ling, Amy. "Pioneers and Paradigms: The Eaton Sisters," in *Between Worlds: Women Writers of Chinese Ancestry,* New York: Pergamon, 1990.

Detailed study of the first Asian American women writers, Sui Sin Far and Onoto Watanna from feminist viewpoint.

White-Parks, Annette. *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

A biographical study of Sui Sin Far and the social pressures surrounding her writing.

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A review of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* in the *Independent,* August 15, 1912.

Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History .* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.

Daniels, Roger. *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850,* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998.

Lanser, Susan C. " *The Yellow Wallpaper* and the Politics of Color in America," in *Feminist Studies,* Vol. 15, No. 3, Fall, 1989, pp. 415-41.

Matsukawa, Yuko. "Cross-Dressing and Cross-naming: Decoding Onoto Watanna," in *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature,* Hanover: New England University Press, 1994.

Riis, Jacob. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York,* New York: Hill and Wang, 1957.

Sui Sin Far. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings,* ed. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

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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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