The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd Study Guide

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd by Walter Raleigh (professor)

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Introduction

"The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is Sir Walter Raleigh's response to a poem written by Christopher Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." In the Marlowe poem, the shepherd proposes to his beloved by portraying their ideal future together: a life filled with earthly pleasures in a world of eternal spring. Raleigh's reply, however, debunks the shepherd's fanciful vision. While Marlowe's speaker promises nature's beauty and a litany of gifts, Raleigh's nymph responds that such promises could only remain valid "if all the world and love were young." Thus, she introduces the concepts of time and change. In her world, the seasons cause the shepherd's "shallow rivers" to "rage," rocks to "grow cold" and roses to "fade." The shepherd's gifts might be desirable, but they too are transient: they "soon break, soon wither" and are "soon forgotten." In the end, the nymph acknowledges that she would accept the shepherd's offer "could youth last" and "had joys no date." Like the shepherd, she longs for such things to be true, but like Raleigh, she is a skeptic, retaining faith only in reason's power to discount the "folly" of "fancy's spring."

Author Biography

One of the most colorful and politically powerful members of the court of Queen Elizabeth I, Raleigh has come to personify the English Renaissance. Born at Hayes Barton, Devonshire, most likely in 1554, Raleigh came from a prominent family long associated with seafaring. In his mid-teens, Raleigh interrupted his education to fight with Huguenot forces in France. Upon his return to England in 1572, he attended Oxford University for two years and left, without earning a degree, to study law in London. One of the first examples of his poetry appeared in 1576 as the preface to George Gascoigne's satire *The Steele Glas* . Two years later, Raleigh and his half-brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert sailed to North America in an unsuccessful attempt to find the Northwest Passage. In 1580, Raleigh took part in the English suppression of Ireland, earning a reputation as a war hero primarily for leading a massacre of unarmed Spanish and Italian troops. Upon his return to England, Raleigh was summoned by Queen Elizabeth to serve as an advisor on Irish affairs. Elizabeth was taken with Raleigh's personal charm, and he soon became one of her court favorites. In addition to lucrative royal commissions and grants, he was knighted in 1585, and in 1587, he was named captain of the Queen's personal guard. The majority of Raleigh's poetry was written during this period, much of it designed to flatter Elizabeth and secure her royal favor. He was able to use that influence to ensure the Queen's favorable reception of his friend Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590). Raleigh also used his influence to gain the Queen's support for his plan to establish the first English colony in North America, on Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina. Established in 1587, the colony was soon abandoned, and its inhabitants vanished without a trace, presumed to have been massacred by members of Chief Powhatan's tribe.

In 1592, Elizabeth discovered that Raleigh had secretly married Elizabeth Throckmorton, a member of the royal court, sometime during the late 1580s. Furious over what she believed to be their betrayal, Elizabeth ordered the couple imprisoned in separate cells in the Tower of London. Although Raleigh was released within months, he was stripped of many of his privileges and exiled from the court. In February of 1595, Raleigh sailed to the Orinoco River in Guiana (now Venezuela) in search of gold. He regained Elizabeth's favor in 1597 by taking part in a daring raid on the Spanish at Cadiz. He was reappointed captain of the Queen's Guard, named governor of the Isle of Jersey, and in 1601, he put down a rebellion led by his longtime rival, the earl of Essex. Elizabeth's successor, James I, disliked and mistrusted Raleigh, and brought charges of treason against him in November, 1603. Convicted and sentenced to death, Raleigh was again imprisoned in the Tower of London, where he spent the next thirteen years. During this time, he wrote *The History of the World* , considered a literary, if not a historical, masterpiece. Raleigh eventually convinced James to release him to lead an expedition to find gold and silver in South America. Spain had become rich and powerful from the gold it had taken from the New World, and with England's treasury nearly depleted, James reluctantly agreed to back the plan. As a result of his earlier voyage to the Orinoco River, Raleigh knew that there was little chance that gold would be found there; he instead planned to capture Spanish ships carrying gold back to Spain.

Although James had ordered Raleigh not to tempt war with Spain, Raleigh believed that if he could pirate enough gold, the king would overlook his disobedience. Unfortunately, the expedition was a disaster. Raleigh encountered and attacked Spanish forces near Santo Tomé, and in the ensuing battle, his eldest son was killed. Upon his return to England, Raleigh was again imprisoned and his order of execution reinstated. He was beheaded outside the Palace of Westminster on October 29, 1618.

Poem Text

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.
5 But time drives flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complain of cares to come.
The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
10 To wayward Winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.
Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
15 Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.
Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
20 To come to thee and be thy love.
But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-8

The nymph's reply begins in the subjunctive—the grammatical mood used to convey hypothetical or contingent action. The subjunctive is commonly expressed with the "if . . . were" construction: "If I were king," for example, or, in the first line of the poem, "If all the world and love were young." This usage sets up the primary rhetorical structure of the entire poem: the speaker is going to contrast the shepherd's vision, his hypothetical world, with the realities introduced by the word "but" in the second stanza. While the second part of the "if" statement—"And truth in every shepherd's tongue"—may seem the more biting, the nature of the contrast exists in the first part. What renders the shepherd's vision false, the nymph says, is time: the world and love do not remain young. Thus, while she finds lovely the shepherd's evocation of spring, shallow rivers, flocks of sheep and rocks that exist merely so lovers can sit on them, in reality these ideal images are time-bound, subject to change and decay. Thus, "time drives flocks from field to fold," "rivers rage" from rainy weather, "rocks grow cold" with winter, and even the nightingale—the timeless symbol of beauty unmentioned in the Marlowe poem—becomes "dumb" with the change in seasons. In contrast with the nightingale are "the rest"—those who do not become dumb but who instead "complain of cares to come." By this, the nymph means human beings who, burdened with the consciousness of passing time, are subject to the anxiety of future misfortunes. In the shepherd's evocation, no such anxieties can exist because no such timeless world can exist: his vision, like Keats's Grecian urn, is only a product of the imagination.

Lines 9-16

Raleigh makes frequent use of the poetic devices that give Marlowe's poem its musicality. Yet the reader cannot help but sense the mockery in end-rhymes like "gall"/"fall" and "forgotten"/"rotten," especially since they follow couplets in which Raleigh exactly duplicates Marlowe's rhymes: "fields"/"yields" and "roses"/"posies." It is as if the nymph adheres to the shepherd's style one moment only to undermine it the next. The same is true for the way Raleigh mimics Marlowe's overuse of alliteration, or the repetition of initial consonant sounds: "flowers" and "fade," "wayward" and "winter," "spring" and "sorrow," "fancy" and "fall." But the slyest form of mockery occurs in lines 9 and 10. Here, Raleigh imitates the glaring grammatical mistake found in the Marlowe poem: just as Marlowe fails to match the singular verb "yields" with its plural subjects in the first stanza of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," so Raleigh mismatches the same singular verb in line 10 with its plural subject "fields" in line 9. But there are also bits of original trickery in the Raleigh poem. In the last line of the second stanza the reader might find a clever double-meaning for the words "spring"—meaning either "source" or the season—and "fall"—an allusion both to autumnal death and the to the "fall of man." This last meaning refers to the creation story: living in the timeless Garden

of Eden and unaware of death or change, man fell prey to the "honey tongue" of Satan, who convinced man to eat the fruit of God-like knowledge.

The consequence of such knowledge is, of course, the awareness of death. After Eden, one cannot live in "fancy's spring" as the shepherd pretends one can. With human consciousness, one instead must suffer the burden of foreknowledge. Thus, the nymph reminds him, his gifts only symbolize decay and the passing of time: they "soon break, soon wither," and are "soon forgotten." While "in folly" such gifts may seem to exist always in their perfect, "ripe" state, to a reason-possessing and time haunted human like the nymph, they are already "rotten" with the foreknowledge of change.

Lines 17-24

In the final two stanzas, the nymph shifts back to the subjunctive mood of the opening lines. Listing the last of the shepherd's gifts, she says, "All these in me no means can move / To come to thee and be thy love." This seems her final word: her rejection. Yet the last stanza offers a twist□a "but." "[C]ould youth last," she says, and "Had joys no date"□if the world were as the shepherd has promised, in other words, then indeed she would be "moved" by his offer and become his love. Although reason prohibits her belief in his promises, she nevertheless wishes such belief were possible. Thus, the nymph admits to the human need to believe in timelessness and immortality. At the same time, however, she must acknowledge that reason prohibits such belief, which it dismisses as "folly."

Themes

Skepticism

This poem is a response to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," written in 1599. In Marlowe's poem, the shepherd asks the woman that he loves to run away with him and live the simple life outdoors, where he will make her clothes from flowers and shells and the wool of their sheep, and life will be a celebration of their youthful love. In her response, Raleigh has the nymph list reasons why the ideal life that the shepherd describes is unlikely to happen. The shepherd emphasizes his love, as if love alone can conquer any problems, and he lists the things that he is willing to do for her as well as the splendors of the simple country life. The nymph, on the other hand, looks at the darker side of human nature. In the second line, she brings up the idea that shepherds do, in fact, lie sometimes, implying that she would be foolish to believe everything that he claims. Throughout the rest of the poem, she explains reasons why, whether he is sincere or not, she has to be skeptical that their life together would be as the shepherd describes it. Her main point is that the shepherd's plans do not account for the changes that are inevitable over time, and so the future that he foresees will almost certainly not come to pass. Her skepticism is based on the fact that she understands his hopeful vision, but that she also sees that he does not understand the world well enough to make an accurate prediction.

Abstinence and Chastity

An element that is important to understanding the nymph's reluctance, but that is never explicitly stated in the poem, is the value she places on her chastity. Her main argument is that the young lovers will probably, over time, lose interest in one another as youthful beauty fades and eventually part.

To readers who assume that the two could then go on with their lives separately, this might seem unimportant. This view, however, does not take into account how much would have changed in the nymph's life by the sheer fact of having lived with the shepherd. To a young lady of the sixteenth century, the importance of retaining her chastity and the circumstances under which she would give it up could not be overstated. There would be no going back to the person she was before once she decided to live with the shepherd. To the strong Christian sensibilities of Elizabethan England, living and sleeping with the shepherd would constitute a serious sin. To a great extent, modern social mores are so different from the nymph's that today's readers cannot feel the enormity of what the shepherd is asking her to give up with such a faint possibility that their love will last. On the other hand, readers who are aware of the immense importance earlier generations put on a woman's chastity might be surprised to hear the nymph say she actually would be willing to run off with the shepherd if she thought that their youthful enthusiasm could last.

Decay

The aging process can sometimes be seen as a period of growth and refinement. The examples that the nymph uses in this poem, however, all present aging as decay. Rivers run dry, plants shrivel, and birds die and fall silent. The nymph uses these examples to show what must inevitably become of youthful love over the course of time. In line 16, she discusses the flowers that the shepherd has offered to weave into clothes for her, and explains their eventual decay with the words, "In folly ripe, in reason rotten." Her point is that the flowers can only be thought to stay their best, "ripe," through mistaken thinking. Reason is the process of seeing the shepherd's offer through to its inevitable solution and, as this nymph sees it, all of the things that the shepherd promises, as well as all things in nature, inevitably lead to decay.

The examples that she uses to show decay, just as the examples that Christopher Marlowe previously had the shepherd use to show the vibrancy of his love, are all physical symbols from nature. This poem does little to address the issue of whether love can grow and adapt□whether it can, as line 21 puts it, "still breed." Like Marlowe, Raleigh draws a connection between love and the worldly things found in nature. The difference is that Marlowe's shepherd points out that love is as wonderful as the nature images he describes, while Raleigh's nymph points out how love eventually will be as decayed as those natural objects.

Lies

The nymph in this poem briefly mentions the possibility of the shepherd being untrue, in the second line, but for the most part she examines his offer to her as if he is being sincere. She does not seem to think that the flowery prose Christopher Marlowe gave the shepherd to say is a trick to get her to run away with him. Instead, she briefly passes over the fact that people generally have the capacity to lie, as just one minor consideration. Contemporary readers are used to seeing writers present their works with some sort of falsehood embedded within them. The post-modern, ironic sensibility gives readers more than the surface situation that is presented, often giving the narrator a hidden, secret idea as well. In a case like Marlowe's poem, a contemporary poet would be more likely to hint that the shepherd is just using poetic language to trick the nymph into sleeping with him. The fact that the nymph only mentions this possibility in passing indicates that she probably thinks he is not lying, or, if he is, he is lying to himself as much as to her. Dramas from the Elizabethan era often present deceptive characters, indicating that lying was not unusual when Raleigh wrote this poem, only that it was not assumed in love poetry of the day.

Style

In structure, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" mimics Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." Like the latter poem, it consists of six four-line stanzas, or quatrains, with each stanza the fusion of two rhymed couplets. Also like Marlowe's poem, the predominant meter of "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is iambic tetrameter. This means each line contains four iambs, or two-syllable units of rhythm in which the first syllable is unstressed and the second is stressed. As an example of iambic tetrameter, consider the following line from the poem:

If all the world and love were young . . .

If we divide the iambs from one another and distinguish unstressed from stressed syllables, the line appears like this:

If all / the world / and love / were young . . .

Reading the line naturally, note the emphasis on the four stressed syllables. Throughout the poem, Raleigh seems to mock Marlowe's strict adherence to iambic tetrameter, even going so far as to mimic many of Marlowe's end-rhymes ("roses" and "posies," for example). This is appropriate to the nature of the response: Raleigh is replying in Marlowe's own terms, eliminating the chance that the superiority of the his argument might be taken as purely rhetorical.

Historical Context

One of the most important aspects of Sir Walter Raleigh's adult life was his close relationship with Queen Elizabeth I. Their close friendship gave him access to many opportunities that he might never have had otherwise, and it eventually put him on the wrong side of the queen's successor, James I, who had Raleigh beheaded.

Elizabeth was the last of the Tudor dynasty, which ruled England from 1485 to 1603. She was the daughter of King Henry VIII and the second of his eight wives, Anne Boleyn. In 1547, when Henry died, Elizabeth's ten-year-old half-brother, Edward, became king. Edward became ill and died six years later, and Mary Tudor, another of Henry VIII's children, ascended to the throne. Mary was a Catholic, and she did not trust Elizabeth's strong Protestantism, so she had Elizabeth locked up in the Tower of London in 1553 until she signed a document swearing her allegiance to the Catholic Church. Mary's marriage to the King of Spain, himself a devout Catholic, acted as encouragement for her to commit English forces to joining Spain in a war against France, during which England suffered great losses. When Mary died in 1558, there were suspicions that she had been poisoned by her many political opponents, who arranged for Elizabeth to take the throne, thinking that she would be a weak ruler that would follow their orders. In fact, Elizabeth turned out to be strong-willed and decisive, ruling for the next forty-five years, leaving the impression of her personality forever on English political and social life.

It was during Elizabeth's reign that England achieved a golden age, with its influence as a world power taking shape for years to come. She calmed the domestic strife between Catholics and Protestants that had torn the country apart for decades by imposing harsh penalties against Catholics and Puritans, uniting the country under the Church of England. She took steps to address the growing problems of urban poverty that arose as the country's population shifted from rural to more urban areas. Through shrewd diplomacy, including a courtship with King Philip of Spain, she was able to raise the country's influence around the world. Elizabeth saw the importance of a strong navy, and built up the British naval fleet, leading to Sir Francis Drake's 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, which established England's dominance of the oceans. It was her interest in world expansion that led her to support many naval expeditions to the Western Hemisphere, including Raleigh's voyages to North America (where he founded Virginia, named after Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen) and to Trinidad and Venezuela, in pursuit of the legendary City of Gold, El Dorado.

During Elizabeth's reign, the literary scene in England blossomed. The list of writers active at that time included Raleigh, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon, and the greatest English poet and playwright of all, William Shakespeare. As a poet, Raleigh was associated with a small, loose-knit group of writers that was dubbed the "School of Night" for their critical skepticism and refusal to accept religious doctrines that did not make logical sense. "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is considered one of the most notable examples of this group's philosophical approach to life. Other

members of the group included Christopher Marlowe, George Chapman, and Thomas Harriot, who was Raleigh's tutor.

Critical Overview

Rather than a simple song, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is considered an example of Raleigh's skepticism. "Memento mori," or recognition of death, and "tempus edax," or "devouring time," are important concepts for understanding Raleigh. He questioned everything, including the religious and political ideas of his time and the premises of the courtly love tradition. Many have contrasted Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" with "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." Jerry Leath Mills has called it a "witty and sardonic" response to Marlowe's poem, by pointedly demonstrating "the human propensity for self-delusion." While Marlowe emphasizes the pleasures of "living and loving" and presents the shared life as a "garden of earthly delights," Raleigh emphasizes the inevitability of change. And while Marlowe presents nature as a place for seduction and pleasure, Raleigh depicts the grim fact of decay. Raleigh is thought by critics such as M. C. Bradbrook to have been part of an antireligious philosophical movement, the "School of Night," that studied occult science and necromancy and defied conventional Christianity. However, his awareness of mortality is evocative of the Christian concept of the fall of man□the reminder that it is delusional to think of Eden without the concept of redemption.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of literature and creative writing at two colleges in Illinois. In the following essay, he explains how, even though poetry was not the primary interest of Sir Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe, they were able to touch on universal truths about humanity by examining the pastoral tradition in poetry.

Most of what has been written about Sir Walter Raleigh focuses, for good reason, on his fascinating life as a suitor of Queen Elizabeth I, an adventurer and a scoundrel, a slayer of indigenous peoples and, overall, as an opportunist who several times slipped out of the clutches of defeat to redefine his own fortune. He founded colonies, named the territory of Virginia, led an expedition to the fabled City of Gold, and spent thirteen years in the Tower of London, where he wrote a million-wordlong history of the world. Of course, he is an important historic figure. Little, though, is written about his poetry. Raleigh was a talented writer in a time when gentlemen generally wrote poetry; his work is generally considered adept, but none too remarkable.

Of the few poems of Raleigh's that are even mentioned today, it is "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" that is most often reprinted. The poem is almost always printed with its companion piece, Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." Readers might find it a bitter piece of irony that Raleigh as a poet is best remembered for what is in effect a novelty piece, an experiment in team writing. If you consider him mainly as an explorer though, it is amazing that any sample of his verse should have stayed in print consistently throughout these past four hundred years.

Neither Marlowe nor Raleigh built his reputation primarily on poetry. Marlowe is, and was then, best known for the writing he did for the stage. Among Elizabethan playwrights, he is considered second only to Shakespeare himself, which is no light feat considering that no playwright in all of history exceeds Shakespeare's reputation. Today, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is constantly revived, while his *Dr. Faustus* is likely to run in most major cities in any given month. Raleigh is, as mentioned, remembered as an explorer, but he also has more legendary anecdotes told about him than most figures of the times. The story of him taking off his cloak and throwing it over a puddle that the queen was about to step in is probably untrue, but it stands today as an unforgettable example of the gallantry of a bygone era. The legend that Raleigh was the individual who brought American tobacco to Europe, and turned the plant into a commercial product, is certainly false, but generations have associated Sir Walter Raleigh with tobacco to such an extent that a popular brand of cigarettes bore his name and likeness, a strange distinction that no other poet can claim.

In life, they were friends, but their different career paths make Marlowe and Raleigh an interesting pair to be linked through time by their poems. The secret to the longevity of these two works seems to be not in the skill of the poets, which, even if combined, would not add up to the skill of many poets who have ended up forgotten ten years after their deaths. Instead, the secret is in the subject matter that these two poems cover so thoroughly. It would be a mistake to think that these are poems about love, even though

that is what most schoolroom discussions probably make of them. They are only about love in the most general sense. More specifically, Marlowe's "Shepherd" poem is about the idealism that either causes or is caused by love, while Raleigh's "Nymph" addresses the sorrow of harsh reality. Together, these poems give readers a brief but thorough tour of all that is best and worst of the pastoral tradition in poetry.

In their book about Raleigh entitled *Shepherd of the Ocean* , J. H. Adamson and H. F. Folland discuss the interest that the poet and Queen Elizabeth took together in "the new vogue of pastoralism." Poems from ancient Greece, recently discovered at that time, stirred up interest in the pastoral convention, which describes life through an image of the idealized existence of literate and artistic shepherds in a lovely landscape of timeless spring, [and] is the playful wish-fulfillment of a sophisticated and complex culture, an imaginative vision of something like an unspoiled Eden, a Golden Age of simple purity and beauty.

Over the centuries, the pastoral convention has arisen regularly in complex societies looking for the quiet serenity of rolling fields, gentle sheep, and honest shepherds who were as close to nature as humans can get. The Elizabethans amused themselves with this sort of idealism; the romantics made it their lives; the moderns were nostalgic, as if they had just missed it. To this day, farmers enjoy idealized associations with soil, sunshine, and seeds, while popular culture tends to forget the cold reality of their lives involving machinery, chemicals, and contracts.

The shepherd that Marlowe presented sprang directly from the tradition of the ancient Greeks, with shallow rivers and singing birds presenting a perfect setting for the noble, optimistic lover who was a popular figure at the time. Half of the poem is about the clothes the shepherd promises to make out of flowers and wool, gold and coral: the appeal these gifts held for the nymph would presumably not be the thrill of having clothes made by a shepherd but wearing things so freshly part of nature. The shepherd does not spend much time proclaiming the intensity of his love for the nymph, instead letting nature make his emotional appeal for him. If anything, that appeal is felt more strongly today. Since Marlowe's time, the world has only gotten more crowded, polluted, and impersonal, as cities have grown to hold larger populations than the entire continent had then. Now, like never before, the rolling hills that Marlowe's shepherd offered trigger a longing for love.

It was not exactly genius that gave Sir Walter Raleigh his insight that the pastoral vision was founded on wishful thinking. The purity and innate wisdom and dignity and all that Adamson and Folland described so well can be mesmerizing to readers when they let themselves become immersed in a pastoral poem, but the same conventions become easy to mock once the reader is out from under the poet's spell. Raleigh's genius was that he wrote his response so immediately, and that he mirrored Marlowe's writing so closely. He provides the yin to Marlowe's yang (opposite principles), the night to Marlowe's day: together, these two poems add up to a whole that says much more about human hopes and fears than the sum of its parts.

Marlowe's shepherd seems sincere in his claims of love, even though the nymph in Raleigh's poem makes a point of mentioning that shepherds are sometimes untrue. A lesser poem might have made more of the fact that lovers can lie to get what they want, using the very strength of the shepherd's claims as evidence that he is trying too hard, that he is hiding his real agenda. The problem with this is that it would mean raising doubts about the nature of love itself, making all lovers subject to suspicion. When the nymph passes so quickly over this possibility of dishonesty, Raleigh can address pastoralism itself without having to bring all lovers into question.

Rather than assault the basic trust that love relies on, the nymph's reply takes on the pastoral tradition. The weakness with this idealized vision is that it focuses on the good things in the world, ignoring the rest. The wrong way to go about countering this idealism would be to argue that there are bad things, too: such an argument would go on to infinity, with good point matching bad. Instead, Raleigh has the nymph take a philosophical approach to pastoralism. She cannot prove that the bad aspects of the life that the shepherd has proposed would be more common or powerful than the good ones, but she can prove that all of the wonders of nature that the shepherd has offered her will eventually go bad.

Time is the key to the nymph's reply. It is time that turns ripeness into rot: not because the universe is bad or love is an illusion, but simply because it is not the nature of things to stay the same. The nymph offers every possible concession to the shepherd's argument. She accepts his sincerity, she admits that the pastoral life is lovely, and she even agrees that she would be glad to live with him in such a beautiful place. Her objection is that it would eventually have to quit being the beautiful place that he has described. There is no arguing against the fact that time changes things.

Between the two poems, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," a whole range of human beliefs is covered. The shepherd is right to stand in awe of the magnificent world that surrounds him, and readers cannot help but feel empathy for his powerful love, which drives him to promise his service and devotion. But the nymph has a good point, too, in showing that the circumstances that the shepherd offers her are bound to change. Each person should be able to understand and agree with each of these views, although, deep down, each person probably leans toward one more than the other. With these two poems, Raleigh and Marlowe created a sort of personality test that helps people understand their own basic beliefs. It is a feat that some poets strive to achieve for a lifetime.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," in *Poetry for Students* , The Gale Group, 2002.

BOOKRAGS

Critical Essay #2

Moran is a secondary school teacher of English and American literature. In this essay, he examines the ways in which Raleigh's poem satirizes the sentiments found in Marlowe's poem.

In his collection of interviews, *Strong Opinions* , Vladimir Nabokov remarks, "Satire is a lesson; parody is a game." In other words, the aim of satire is to point out some fault in human nature that the artist feels needs to be remedied, while the aim (or "game") of parody is to imitate the form and style of the original work as closely as possible. Well-crafted parodies are often amusing, but when an artist combines the playful game of parody with the weighty lessons of satire, the result can be a work more intense and thought-provoking than one that only mimics or instructs. Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is one of the most forceful examples of what happens when parody (in this case, an imitation of the language used by "proposers" who offer their solutions to social ills) is combined with a "lesson" (the English are responsible for the terrible poverty in Ireland): the result is Swift's unforgettable essay. Other writers have merged satire and parody with similarly impressive results. Lawrence Sterne's *Tristam Shandy* , Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" and Nabokov's own *Pale Fire* all amuse their readers by imitating existing literary forms (for example, diaries, epics, and criticism) while simultaneously "teaching" their readers some "lesson" about human failings. All satirists must, in part, assume the role of teacher, since they speak from a position from which they can identify the shortcomings of others. The humor inherent in parody, however, makes these lessons more palatable. Sir Walter Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" is a work that, like the previously mentioned examples, combines the lesson of satire and the game of parody to point out the silliness of the promises being made in Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and, by extension, the promises of all young, eager lovers.

The vows of the shepherd□a stock character in pastoral poetry known for his innocence□are deadon-arrival when they reach the ears of Raleigh's nymph, who speaks from experience and with a sense of worldliness that her suitor does not anticipate and presumably cannot understand. The artistry and fun of Raleigh's poem lies in the way that it parodies Marlowe's original to, ultimately, teach the shepherd (and the reader) a lesson about the effects of time on promises made in youth. The nymph's intention to teach the shepherd a lesson is evident in the fact that she does not refuse him outright until almost the end of the poem. Instead, she speaks of hypothetical possibilities that, if true, would lead her to accept his invitations. By withholding her refusal until the end of the poem, however, the nymph ensures that the shepherd understands, or at least considers, why she is refusing him at all. Perhaps she has encountered such passionate shepherds before and this most recent invitation to "live with me and be my love" has unleashed this didactic reply. At any rate, her lesson is a forceful one whose humor is only apparent to the reader□certainly not to the shepherd, who, one imagines, listens to the nymph's reply in stunned silence.

The nymph begins her lesson with a hypothetical premise, the first of several in the poem: "If all the world and love were young," she states, she "might" be moved to love him. The tone of the opening seems polite ("I would love you, of course, except for this one small thing") but the "if," in this case, presents an impossible situation: "all the world and love" are not "young." The planet has existed for eons, and her understanding of love has matured with time and experience. Hers is not a "young" heart, easily won by poetry. This tone of polite refusal coupled with an impossibility is the first sign that she has no intention of succumbing. Her second hypothetical situation: "if" there were "truth in every shepherd's tongue," does the same rhetorical office as the first: if shepherds taken as a type were all honest, she would be moved to love him—but she is too wise to take stock in such a naive notion. Her calling his offers of pastoral paradise "pretty pleasures" adds to the sense of sarcastic scorn covered by a thin layer of ostensible politeness. The next two stanzas elaborate upon the nymph's first hypothetical premise about the age of the world. Unlike *carpe diem* poems in which a young woman is urged to love her suitor before, as Andrew Marvell calls it, "time's winged chariot" has run its course, the nymph's words argue that the passing of time is the reason why she will not love the shepherd. Raleigh's poem can thus be read as the counterpart, or complement, of Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" or Herrick's "To the Virgins." All of the enticements offered by the shepherd will be affected for the worse by time: the flocks will move "from field to fold"; the "rocks," upon which they will presumably sit, will "grow cold"; the nightingale will become "dumb" and "the rest"—a group in which they are presumably included—will "complain of cares to come." With the passing of time, the passion of youth must, she argues, give way to the worries inherent in old age—something that Marlowe's shepherd innocently, or conveniently, fails to mention in his appeal. "Flowers do fade" and so will their passion. Even worse, "wanton fields / To wayward winter reckoning yields": even the most lively and lusty lovers must pay the reckoning of winter, when fields and feeling grow fallow.

Marlowe's shepherd may be an innocent bumpkin (who simply has no idea that his gifts have become empty clichés) or a conniving lothario (who adopts the pose of a simpler man to seem less threatening). Marlowe never tells the reader and so both interpretations are valid. As the poem proceeds, however, the nymph seems to assume the worst about her would-be country husband. Her epigram, or witty remark, "A honey tongue, a heart of gall, / Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall" implies that the shepherd is consciously using "honeyed" words to disguise his inner "gall": what sounds sweet only covers a bitter truth. The parallel structure of these lines helps the nymph emphasize her distance in age and worldliness from those who may fall prey to such promises. A "honey tongue" is "fancy's spring" because sweet words excite the imagination; such words, however, always lead to "sorrow's fall" and disillusionment. Of course, "spring" and "fall" are words that refer not only to figurative physical actions but to the seasons as well: just as in springtime, when new life (and love) is in bloom, fall always arrives to undo the fruits of nature and promises made in the spring of youth.

The content of the nymph's attack on the shepherd is obviously severe; what makes it even more biting is her parody of the shepherd's style. Marlowe's poem is written in iambic tetrameter, a light and singsong meter (associated with simple, honest speakers) used to complement the images of the pleasant pastoral life that will be the nymph's,

should she accept the shepherd's offer. Likewise, Raleigh's poem is written in iambic tetrameter, as if the nymph is mimicking the "honey tongue" of the shepherd. As Marlowe's poem features several alliterative phrases (words that begin with the same sound or type of sound, again to reflect the "honey tongue"), Raleigh's abounds in them. The nymph of Raleigh's poem speaks of "pretty pleasures," how "rivers rage and rocks grow cold," how many will "complain of cares to come," how "flowers fade" and "wanton fields" fall to "wayward winter," and how the shepherd's promises are "ripe" in one way yet "rotten" in another. The difference is that Marlowe's shepherd uses alliteration to please the nymph's ear and, by extension, her heart, while Raleigh's nymph uses them to mock the very notion that she can be taken in by poetry, however pleasant it may sound. More importantly, the nymph parodies the very quality of the shepherd's presumed love by listing all the things promised to her ("Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses," etc.); she implies that such easily "withered" and "forgotten" things are, in essence, a joke. These unsubstantial trifles are, as Polonius in *Hamlet* calls them, "springes to catch woodcocks"—little traps used to catch unsuspecting birds. This bird, however, has been through the forest of love and found it to be a rough place; things weightier than "ivy buds" and "amber studs" are needed if she is to consider his offer and if love is to endure.

By the last stanza, the nymph's tone and dismissal of the shepherd is unmistakable, yet she reverts to the tone of "polite indignation" found in the opening lines and again offers a hypothetical situation in which she would reciprocate the shepherd's passion. But "could youth last and love still breed, / Had joys no date nor age no need," then she would consider his offer. As before, she offers imaginary impossibilities to suggest the real impossibility of her giving in to his offers: youth does not last, love does not always grow, the joys of life do end, and old age is a time of tremendous need. Her final couplet, therefore, features a perfectly reasonable tone that both completes the game of parody (by imitating the shepherd's final couplet) and the lesson of satire (anyone who assumes that an intelligent woman can be easily moved with material things is a fool). Marlowe, alas, never composed "The Shepherd's Reply to the Nymph," so readers can only assume that after hearing her speak, the shepherd walked back to his fields, scratching his head and wondering what he said that could have sparked such a reply—or that he sought out another nymph less experienced and more easily swayed by promises of pastoral pleasures.

Source: Daniel Moran, Critical Essay on "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," in *Poetry for Students* , The Gale Group, 2002.

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Critical Essay #3

Taibl has published widely in poetic studies. In the following essay, she explores Raleigh's poem as a companion poem exposing the conventions and escapism of the pastoral form and questioning the romanticized notion of the simple life.

Sir Walter Raleigh's poem, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," is one of the most celebrated companion poems in all of English literature as it responds to and challenges Christopher Marlowe's poem, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." Raleigh's poem engages the earlier poem in a dialogue that challenges the validity of the Elizabethan romantics' preoccupation for the pastoral, or the idyllic, simple life. Raleigh points toward a more complex and realistic understanding of life that is subject to darkness and the inevitable progression of time. Raleigh uses the conventions of Marlowe's poem to mock the idealized picture of nature for which Marlowe argues. By subverting the content of Marlowe's poem, Raleigh follows the prescriptions for a companion poem, which critic Steven May, in his article, "Companion Poems in the Raleigh Canon," describes as "one poem that may answer another, usually in a contradictory fashion," or as "two or more poems that may begin with similar themes and wording what appear to be exercises in literary collaboration." Following May's definition, Raleigh accomplishes both of these tasks as his nymph contradicts Marlowe's shepherd using pastoral conventions and direct allusions to Marlowe's poem to do so. Raleigh is not alone in his use of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." Other poets to use Marlowe's lines either through direct quotation, or allusion, include: John Donne, Robert Herrick, C. Day Lewis, and even Shakespeare in his "Merry Wives of Windsor." Raleigh's effort is perhaps the most famous, and was almost as popular as Marlowe's poem in the sixteenth century. Raleigh pays tribute to the loveliness of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" as he constructs a parallel vision more prone to questions concerning the validity and possibility of the shepherd's idyllic portrait.

Raleigh and Marlowe wrote at the height of the Renaissance, which came to England in the sixteenth century under the rule of Queen Elizabeth. The era was marked by an urgent sense of the meaning of the word Renaissance, or "rebirth," as artists worked with and through one another to discover new artistic forms and make old forms new. The companion poem is a fine example of the ways in which artists, as May suggests, were working in dialogue with one another to create deep, lasting impressions with their audiences. Raleigh worked in dialogue with many of his Elizabethan romantic contemporaries including Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and Christopher Marlowe. Critic C. F. Tucker Brooke, in his article "Sir Walter Raleigh as Poet and Philosopher," claims that Raleigh "shares Sidney's courtly brilliance and chivalry, Spenser's political imagination, and Marlowe's luminous independence of mind. He is more like each of the three than any of them was like another." Such a variety of literary skills coupled with his political and practical talents made Raleigh a truly Renaissance, or "complete," "well-rounded" man. Raleigh brings his diverse talents to "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" as he uses the pastoral lyric to reveal a darker future than was generally explored using the form. Throughout "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," Raleigh employs allusion, or direct literary reference, to Marlowe's poem. The singsong, "To live

with thee and be thy love," is taken directly from Marlowe's poem. Instead of a wistful dreaming, with it, Raleigh employs more pessimism and caution. Where Marlowe sings of loveliness and inflated possibility, Raleigh claims implausibility. Raleigh's "pretty pleasures" in the third line of the poem refer to the ornaments of the pastoral lyric form and the pretty surface of Marlowe's idealized natural world. The "pretty pleasures" are not enough for Raleigh because they do not last. In the poem, he suggests the futility and meaninglessness of ornaments and unattainable musings.

The use of the pastoral form dates to the third century B . C ., and was, even then, a conventional poem celebrating the simplicity and peace of a shepherd's life in an idealized natural setting. The word "pastoral" comes from the Latin, "pastor" for "shepherd," thus the preponderance of shepherd characters in the examples of the form. The word "idyl," is used synonymously with "pastoral," and is connected to the romanticized notion of the shepherd's "idyllic" life roaming through perfected nature. The form worked for the Elizabethan romantic whose goal was, as Brooke explains, to "expand the world in which men live□the world of the senses and the world of the spirit." Marlowe's poem does this through idealization of the natural world. Raleigh addresses such an expansion of mind and ideas by questioning the idyl. In the sixteenth century, "idyl" would also be used to describe the life of the high-ranking gentry, who led idle lives and were exempt from the physical work of the shepherd, but whose role suggested a similar romanticized and idealized state. It is this romanticized notion of life as a gentleman and courtier that Raleigh deems unrealistic in the face of changing times.

Marlowe and Raleigh's dialogue pits the simple pastoral life against the influence of a more complex existence where dark shadows reside alongside the bright meadows of the shepherd's home. Pastorals, including Marlowe's, favor the simple. Raleigh uses the form to expose the rudimentary and short-sightedness of the simple. Where Marlowe escapes from the court and society and flees to nature, Raleigh argues that such escapism, such simplicity is unattainable. In Marlowe's opening if/then statement, there is a sense of certain romance and possibility. Raleigh's opening if/then statement is more cautious, uncertain. He seems to suggest that if such an idealized life were possible, he would embrace the romantic, but his "if" is much more uncertain. His uncertainty stems from questioning the truth the shepherd tells. Is there "truth in every shepherd's tongue?" the nymph seems to ask. Is there any truth, or any possibility of such a simple life? The nymph and Raleigh are not at all certain. Where Marlowe's "melodious birds sing madrigals," Raleigh's nightingale, his "Philomel," ceases singing and becomes "dumb," solidifying the implausibility of the romantic. Where Marlowe sees only the positive future, Raleigh sees and understands a future fraught with difficulty as much as with ease. Raleigh's second stanza introduces the element of time that so permeates and clouds his romantic visions. Time "drives flocks from field to fold" and turns "the rest" to the cares and burdens of the future. Joyce Horner, in "The Large Landscape: A Study of Certain Images in Raleigh," discusses Raleigh's tendency to expose the trappings of the ideal through a look at the power and fluctuations of time. Often, Horner notes, Raleigh's work addresses "the erasing, effacing power of time, the vanity of human effort." Raleigh's contemporary, Spencer, called Raleigh the "Shepherd of the Ocean," as he tackled the vastness, the "ocean," of the historical and human

landscape. Raleigh's poetic voice is not content in the clean, conventional, and idealistic pastoral lyric unless it is exposing and subverting its conventions in an attempt to discuss the larger picture of human history. Where Marlowe's imagery offers a contained and tamed nature, Raleigh acknowledges "wanton," or rebellious fields and "wayward Winter." Here, the poet does not control the image of nature. Nature is ruler. Time progresses through the seasons and carries humanity with it. In this stanza, we cannot trust a "honey tongue" because it may hide "a heart of gall." Idyllic portraits, Raleigh suggests, are not to be trusted. To trust in the image and the ideal is to miss meaning. Horner notes in Raleigh's lyrics, "the small, enclosed world of the pastoral keeps cracking," and where "life-giving streams overflow," Raleigh also recognizes that "they have the power to drown." That life exists next to death, for Raleigh, is the point. That the romantic must exist next to the realistic is a fact with which the poet, the courtier, and the shepherd ultimately must contend.

In the fourth stanza of "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," the trifles of language, the masks of idealism, which deal with nothing but self-delusion are "In folly ripe, in reason rotten." Raleigh does more than suggest the pastoral lyric's lack of real power. For Raleigh, challenging the delusion is what creates meaning, and he is looking beyond the conventions of the form, the folly and fun, to address the greater human story, which is one of struggle and "Winter" as much as it is one of romance in "May." The shepherd's "belt of straw and ivy buds," his "coral clasps and amber studs" become the frivolous ornaments of the pastoral lyric, the elements of superficial living. For Raleigh, the trifles of language and convention, these elements and visions of a shallow life, cannot move him to believe in the romantic. The need for a deeper love is implied, a relationship with society and lover that has the ability to transcend the beautiful ideal by questioning its validity and living fully in the darkness as much as the light. But, Raleigh needs the ideal to fully see and write the contradiction.

Raleigh's nymph is as wrapped up in the thought of the ideal as Marlowe's shepherd, if not more so. For the nymph, the romantic ideal is the ultimate prize, made even more beautiful for its illusiveness and the yearning it creates with its distance and impossibility. If it were possible to harbor a constant joy, if youth was endless and love boundless, then perhaps, Raleigh suggests, he would be able to live and love the shepherd's passionate vision. But, only if . . . therefore, never.

The ideal cannot exist without the contradiction of that ideal, and herein lay the strength of this companion poem. In the sixteenth century, audiences seemed to recognize, as Brooke notes, "The forces of Elizabethan romanticism are seen in him [Raleigh] not fused, but in divergence, not in harmony, but in conflict. Raleigh's imagination destroyed nearly as much as it created." Together Raleigh's destruction and Marlowe's creation present a whole picture. Raleigh's vision balances Marlowe's and allows for the questioning that becomes the basis for a fully realized experience. In "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," Raleigh harbors a yearning for the ideal that would make it possible to live and love as the shepherd, a yearning that is not quite belief, but a yearning that can be in itself a kind of rebirth. Raleigh's questions and dark predictions stem from this yearning, creating a deep impression and invitation to the reader to

consider the many complex implications of what it means "To live with thee and be thy love."

Source: Erika Taibl, Critical Essay on "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd," in *Poetry for Students* , The Gale Group, 2002.

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Adaptations

A 1999 audiocassette of Professor Elliot Engel's lecture entitled "Sir Walter Raleigh, Renaissance Man" is available from Author's Ink of Raleigh, North Carolina.

Sir Walter Raleigh is one of the authors included on Spoken Arts' audiocassette *Elizabethan Love Poems* , presented by Arthur Luce Klein and published in 1969.

The videocassette *English Explorers* , released by Schlesinger Media in 2000, has an actor as Sir Walter Raleigh narrating the stories of explorers such as himself, John Cabot, and Sir Francis Drake.

Sir Walter Raleigh and the Orinoco Disaster is the fourth tape in a six-tape videocassette series from Kulter, Inc., called "Great Adventurers," released in 1999.

A 1987 videocassette from Films for the Humanities entitled *Medieval to Elizabethan Poetry* covers poems and songs from England, 1400-1600, including Raleigh's poetry.

This poem and Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd" are also included on *The Poetry Hall of Fame* , originally part of the Public Broadcasting System's "Anyone for Tennyson?" series. This videocassette was released by Monterey Home Video in 1993.

Raleigh is one of the characters in the Englishlanguage opera *Gloriana* , about life in the court of Elizabeth I. A videocassette from 1984 is available on Thorn EMI/HBO Video.

Topics for Further Study

In the last stanza of the poem, what does the Nymph mean by age having need? How does this stand in the way of her relationship with the shepherd?

In this poem, the Nymph counters the shepherd's request to live with him and be his love. Rewrite the argument in prose, in modern language, so that it could be used by any young person today as a defense against pressure from a lover.

Compare the style of this poem to Christopher Marlowe's style in writing "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." In what ways has Raleigh matched Marlowe's style exactly? What clues can you find to indicate that the two works are by separate authors?

William Shakespeare wrote at the same time that Raleigh did. Choose a character from Shakespeare's plays that you think is most like the Nymph portrayed here. Why do you think so?

Write a short story about the Nymph in her old age. Would she be satisfied with her decision to refuse the shepherd's offer, or would she regret having let him get away? Why?

Compare and Contrast

1600: England is experiencing one of the greatest eras of literary growth that it has ever known. Theater, in particular, is popular, with artists such as Christopher Marlowe (*Dr. Faustus* , *Tamburlaine*) and William Shakespeare, whose *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar* both appear this year. Poets of the time include George Herbert, John Donne, and Ben Jonson, who is so popular that he has his own group of followers, who call themselves the Tribe of Ben.

Today: The works of the Elizabethan playwrights are still held up as examples of craftsmanship and word artistry and are performed frequently.

1600: The queen of England, Elizabeth I, is the country's political, spiritual, and social leader. Her personal relationships with suitors like Raleigh are kept out of the public eye.

Today: The British royal family has hardly any political authority. Newspapers regularly expose scandals about the personal lives of the royals.

1600: Tobacco, recently imported from North America, is popular among the elite of London. Although a tradition that Sir Walter Raleigh is the first person to import tobacco into Europe develops, tobacco is really introduced by John Hawkins in 1565.

Today: Tobacco use in third world countries continues to rise, while use in industrialized nations is decreasing due to a greater access to information detailing tobacco's inherent health risks.

1600: America is a land occupied by its native inhabitants. Sir Walter Raleigh's attempt to start a colony in Virginia in 1585 failed, as did several other expeditions. French traders have been able to live peaceably with the Indians, but the English are not able to spread their civilization to this continent until the founding of Jamestown in 1607.

Today: Because England was the dominant colonizing force in America throughout the seventeenth century, it is the country that America is most closely linked to culturally.

What Do I Read Next?

To fully appreciate this poem, it should be read in conjunction with Christopher Marlowe's poem, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," which can be found in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems* , edited by Mark Thornton Burnett and published by Tuttle Publishing in 2001.

One of Raleigh's most famous poems is "A Vision upon the Conceit of the Faerie Queene." It is his response to the book-length poem, "The Faerie Queene," by his friend and protégé Edmund Spenser.

John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is one of the greatest poems from the romantic period, two hundred years after this poem was written. It addresses the same themes Raleigh addressed, looking with sorrow at the youthful figures painted on the urn of the title, who can enjoy their youth forever. It is in most standard poetry anthologies, as well as Modern Library's *The Complete Poems of John Keats* (1994).

The case that Raleigh makes here about the consequences of present actions would also apply to another famous poem, Robert Herrick's "To The Virgins, to Make Much of Time," which was published in 1648. Like Marlowe's poem, Herrick's presents a suitor pressuring the woman he loves to take advantage of youth, encouraging her to forget the effects of time that are the focus of Raleigh's poem. Robert Herrick's poetry is available in an Everyman's Paperback Classic edition, edited by Douglas Brooks-Davies and published in 1997.

A new book about Raleigh's tragic exploration of the Orinoco River to find the City of Gold, El Dorado, is Charles Nicholl's *The Creature in the Map: A Journey to El Dorado* , reprinted in 1997 by University of Chicago Press. Nicholl, a travel writer and English literature scholar, traces the trip step-by-step.

Readers can see the spirit of Raleigh in one of Edgar Allan Poe's most moving poems, "The Road to El Dorado," which does not mention Raleigh but focuses instead on the excitement of knights seeking the city of legend. It is in many poetry anthologies, and can also be found in Doubleday Press's *Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1966).

Seamus Heaney is a Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet. In 1990, Sidney Burris did a study of Heaney that connected his themes to those explored in this poem. The book, *The Poetry of Resistance: Seamus Heaney and the Pastoral Tradition* , Ohio University Press, shows his work to be like Raleigh's in its insistence on reality over idealism.

Further Study

Aronson, Marc, *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado* , Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.

Although written for a young adult audience, this recent biography gives a good sense of Raleigh's life as an explorer, especially in his vain journey to Venezuela to find the fabled Land of Gold.

Beer, Anna R., *Sir Walter Raleigh and His Readers in the Seventeenth Century: Speaking to the People* , Macmillan Press, 1997.

This historical study gives a better sense of the time that Raleigh wrote in, giving students an idea of the relationships between poets and of Raleigh's relationship with the English court.

Irwin, Margaret, *That Great Lucifer: A Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh* , Chatto & Windus, 1960.

This book is not a comprehensive biography, but rather, as its title declares, a "portrait." It is divided into two parts, focusing on Raleigh's relationship with Elizabeth and then with James, her successor on the throne.

Latham, Agnes, and Joyce Youings, eds., *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh* , University of Exeter Press, 1999.

Although Raleigh's output as a poet was meager, he was a tireless letter writer, and some of his best literary output can be found here.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Poetry for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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