Originally Study Guide

Originally by Carol Ann Duffy

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Memories play a significant role in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy, particularly her recollections of childhood places and events. The poem □Originally,□ published in *The Other Country* (1990), draws specifically from memories of Duffy's family's move from Scotland to England when she and her siblings were very young. The first-born child, Duffy was just old enough to feel a deep sense of personal loss and fear as she traveled farther and farther away from the only place she had known as □home□ and the family neared its alien destination. This sentiment is captured in □Originally,□ in which it is described in the rich detail and defining language of both the child who has had the experience and the adult who recalls it.

As the title suggests, a major concern of the poem is beginnings□one's roots, birthplace, and homeland. Stanzas 1 and 2 center on the pain of giving up, or being forced to give up, the comfort of a familiar environment and of feeling odd and out of place in a new one. In stanza 3, the final stanza, Duffy does an about-face, describing what it feels like to accept fate, to resign oneself to change and move on. The last line of the poem, however, presents an intriguing conundrum: Has the speaker really learned to forgo originality, or has she not?

In addition to *The Other Country*, □Originally□ appears in *The Salmon Carol Ann Duffy: Poems Selected and New 1985-1999* (2000). This book contains works chosen by Duffy specifically for the Salmon Publishing poetry series and includes poems from five of her previous volumes.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: Scottish

Birthdate: 1955

Carol Ann Duffy was born on December 23, 1955, in Glasgow, Scotland. When she was about five years old, she moved with her parents and younger brothers to Stafford, England, where her father took a position as a fitter with English Electric. The move to England would prove to have a profound effect on Duffy, who eventually attributed to it her sense of rootless existence and search for a new identity. Duffy's poem "Originally," published in *The Other Country* (1990), explores this theme, although it is only one of many that do.

Duffy attended grammar school in Stafford from 1962 to 1967 and then spent her middle school years at Saint Joseph's, a convent school, where she first learned to love poetry, both reading and writing it. Encouraged by an enthusiastic teacher, Duffy decided at age fourteen that she wanted to be a poet. From 1970 to 1974, she attended Stafford Girls' High School. Duffy's first small collection of poems, *Fleshweathercock, and Other Poems,* was published in 1973.

Duffy graduated from the University of Liverpool in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and worked various jobs while continuing to develop her poetry skills and to earn extra income from freelance writing. By 1982, she was working as a writer in residence in London's East End schools, where she was able to offer the same encouragement to young writers that she had been afforded in her middle and high school years. Also during this time, Duffy met Jackie Kay, the poet and writer who would become her life partner.

In 1986, Duffy's first full-length poetry collection, *Standing Female Nude*, won a Book Award from the Scottish Arts Council, and in 1989 Duffy received the Dylan Thomas Award. Throughout the 1990s, Duffy continued to have poetry published and to win awards. In 1995, Duffy gave birth to a daughter, and in 1996 she and Kay moved to Manchester, England, where Duffy accepted a part-time position teaching creative writing at the city's Metropolitan University.

Although she was considered a candidate for British poet laureate in 1999, Duffy was rejected, presumably because of her unconventional lifestyle. As the lesbian daughter of a working-class Scotsman and raising a child with her black partner, Duffy was not quite what British government had in mind for its leading poet. Undaunted by the political snub, Duffy became one of Great Britain's most celebrated feminist poets. Her works include poetry for children as well as for adults. A volume of poetry for adults, *Rapture*, was published in 2005.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-3

Lines 1 through 3 of □Originally□ establish the personas in the poem, identified by the phrases □our mother□ and □our father's.□ The first word, □We,□ must refer to a family. These lines also establish the setting of the work and suggest a personal attachment to a place: □our own country.□ The setting, or place, however, is not stationary; rather, the □red room,□ most likely a reference to the vehicle in which the family is traveling, appears to rush along, falling □through the fields□ that go by in a blur. The phrase □turn of the wheels□ further clarifies that the speaker and her family are in a car, but the words that precede it are a bit misleading in the tone they convey: □. . . our mother singing / our father's name to the turn of the wheels□ suggests a merrily traveling family, riding lightheartedly down the road. The rest of the poem, however, suggests otherwise.

Lines 4-6

Lines 4 through 6 imply anything but a carefree joyride. The speaker's brothers are distraught, crying, and □one of them bawling *Home*, / *Home*.□ This boy's cries disclose the source of the children's pain and frustration: they want to go home, but home does not exist anymore. Instead, it is only a house with □vacant rooms□ back in the city they have left for good.

Lines 7 and 8

Lines 7 and 8, the final two lines of stanza 1, make clear that the family has moved permanently from their previous home. The speaker's mind is still back in her old house as she clutches a toy, □holding its paw,□ perhaps in the same manner she would like to have her own hand held in an act of comfort during a tumultuous time. Just as she offers solace to the toy, so, too, the toy provides her a measure of security and relief as she silently longs for the place □where we didn't live any more.□

Lines 9-11

Lines 9 through 11, the first lines of stanza 2, present a more objective view of the effects on children of pulling up roots. The beginning of line 9 is significant: □All childhood is an emigration.□ The implication is that the simple fact of growing up involves a continuous departure from one moment, one age, and one level of maturity to another. It seems natural enough that children go through a variety of stages on the way to adulthood, but the word Duffy chooses, □emigration,□ implies a physical progression, a movement from one place to another. The speaker offers scenarios of how emigration might happen. □Some are slow,□ allowing the child to ponder the

situation, perhaps feeling □resigned□ to the fact that he or she has wandered into an area □where no one you know stays.□ Line 11 ends with a kind of emigration that is more pertinent to the poet's own experience: □Others are sudden.□

Lines 12-14

Lines 12 through 14 provide details on the kinds of □sudden□ changes that can have a profound effect on a child who encounters them. Even though one may speak the same native language as the citizens of a different state or country, there is still the matter of □wrong□ accents and longed-for familiar places that turn into □unimagined, pebble-dashed estates.□ The latter description implies that even the architectural differences between the home place and the new place can be disturbing to a wary child. Odd customs and language barriers are further depicted in the speaker's astonishment over □big boys / eating worms and shouting words□ she cannot understand.

Lines 15 and 16

Lines 15 and 16 reflect the speaker's innermost thoughts concerning the family's move to a new land. She senses her □parents' anxiety,□ which she finds both nagging and worrying. In a moment of explicit candor, the speaker states her single desire: □*I want our own country*.□

Line 17

Line 17, the first line of stanza 3, stands out as an abrupt shift in both the poem's message and its tone. The first word, □But,□ indicates a change in thought, and it is followed by words that appear to negate the overwhelming power of memory expressed in stanzas 1 and 2: □you forget, or don't recall.□ Perhaps the final word in this line is most indicative of the speaker's own situation. She comes to accept that □change□ is inevitable, a change not only in the physical environment but also in one's own heart and mind.

Lines 18-21

Line 18 is a reference to line 14. The speaker's brother begins to behave like the other boys who are eating worms. Seeing him □swallow a slug□ does not make the speaker feel as much shame as when the family first arrived in the new country, because she is getting used to the language and customs. However, she uses the Scottish word for □splinter□ (□skelf□) to describe her feelings. Use of the original language implies that there is still a sense of nostalgia for the old country. The speaker, however, describes losing her native accent like a snake □shedding its skin□ until she sounds □just like the rest□ of her classmates in her new school. The words that end line 21, □Do I only think,□ are important in establishing the speaker's continuing fluctuation in her attempt

to assess the effect of the childhood move on the rest of her life. She questions whether she really knows the effect or only believes she does.

Lines 22-24

Lines 22 through 24, the final three lines of □Originally,□ provide insight into what the speaker questions the loss of. From the obviously physical (□a river□) to the more personal and intangible (□culture, speech□), the speaker mulls the bygone things of her former life and country. She equates her □first space□ with the □right place,□ implying that there is something wrong with her current place. With her mind full of questions, doubts, and wonder, the speaker finds it difficult to answer a simple question that someone asks her: □*Where do you come from*?□ To one who has struggled with a loss of identity, both national and personal, the question may not be so simple. All the speaker can do is □hesitate□ as she tries to determine her original home.

Themes

Identity Loss

□Originally□ is a poem about a child fearful of losing her identity and the struggle she goes through in an attempt to retain it. The title itself indicates the significance of roots and of having definite origins, something the speaker worries she has lost by being forced to leave her native country at such a young age. The temperament within the family as a whole seems harmonious enough: The mother sings the father's name □to the turn of the wheels,□ and there is no mention of quarreling among the children. Instead, it is the idea of place, not people, that stirs feelings of apprehension and uncertainty. The boys cry because they know they have lost their familiar environment forever, and one of them leaves no room for doubting the source of his pain as he bawls, □*Home*, / *Home*.□

A strong sense of patriotic pride and nationalism has been a common theme in British poetry for centuries, and many contemporary poets such as Duffy carry on the tradition. As the central theme of this poem indicates, a native land is not only the place where one is born but also one's starting point, the location where an individual life begins, including the emotional, cultural, and spiritual identity. Every minute of every day, however, adults around the world make conscious decisions to move from one place to another, to leave their places of birth far behind, perhaps forever. These people probably do not suffer identity crises when they arrive in a new home. They choose to move. The significant difference in Duffy's poem is that it derives from a child's perspective, a little girl who has not chosen.

Children place a great deal of emphasis on belonging, both on what and whom they belong to and on what belongs to them. Whether possessions are tangible, like a toy, or intangible, like a country, the idea of having something or identifying with something is important. In □Originally,□ the speaker uses the phrase □our own country□ twice: □We came from our own country□ (line 1) and □*I want our own country*□ (line 16). □Our own□ are the most meaningful words, because they imply a feeling and a place with which the speaker identifies. As an adult, the speaker can look back and conclude, □All childhood is an emigration,□ but to the child who experiences it, the conclusion is one of fear, loss, and resignation.

Cultural Integration

Another considerable theme in □Originally□ is cultural integration. The family is moving not simply from one city to another or one state to another but to an entirely different country. One who knows Duffy's background knows that the particular nations are Scotland and England, the poet having moved with her parents and brothers from the former to the latter when the children were very young. Both countries are part of Great Britain, so the experience is not the same as it would be for one who moves, for

example, from Scotland to China or from Iran to the United States. The latter type of move involves drastically different languages, writing systems, and cultures, and adapting can be extremely challenging. Duffy shows, however, that even emigrating from one British nation to another presents language and lifestyle obstacles.

Stanza 3 of □Originally□ explores the idea of integrating a familiar way of life into a new way. The accent that is □wrong□ in line 12 and the boys who shout □words you don't understand□ in line 14 are eventually diluted by the need of the human mind to find peace and reconciliation in line 17: □you forget, or don't recall, or change.□ Before long, the Scottish brothers are swallowing slugs as their English playmates do. The Scottish speaker's □voice / in the classroom□ begins to sound like the voices of her English schoolmates. The impression is that the entire family manages to settle into their new lives in England, not completely forgetting their native country but blending the old culture into the new. Perhaps to emphasize that integrating does not imply forgetting, the speaker makes clear in the end that she still must □hesitate□ when someone questions where she is from. She may have no problem answering in regard to her current location, but the notion of □*Originally* □ stops her cold.

Style

Traditional blank verse is composed of lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter, which means lines of ten syllables with the accent on the first syllable of each pair of syllables. A common example is the work of Shakespeare, whose plays are written in this form. In the line, □If music be the food of love, play on□ (*Twelfth Night*, act 1, scene 1, line 1), note the TA-dum TA-dum TA-dum TA-dum TA-dum rhythm. Defined more loosely, blank verse can mean any unrhymed poetry, only slight attention being given to the structure of iambic pentameter. □Originally□ falls into this category.

Less than a third of the lines in □Originally□ have exactly ten syllables, most having eleven or twelve. Nonetheless, stanza 1 contains four ten-syllable lines in a row, lines 2 through 5, and the iambic pentameter is readily recognized in □which fell through the fields, our mother singing / our father's name to the turn of the wheels.□ The construction of the poem, however, does not become bogged down in too much effort to follow a specific metrical form. Instead, the more interesting aspects of the style are the occasional rhymes and near rhymes that pepper the work.

Examples of near rhymes include □fields□ in line 2 with □wheels□ in line 3, □*Home, / Home* □ in lines 4 and 5 with □rooms□ in line 6, □more□ in line 7 with □paw□ in line 8, □understand□ in line 14 with □said□ in line 16, and □change□ in line 17 with □shame□ in line 19. The only example of exact rhyme is □space□ in line 22 with □place□ in line 23. Alliteration, or the repetition of usually initial consonants for poetic effect, also plays a role in the poem's construction. The most obvious examples are in lines 9, 10, and 11 with the *s* sound: □. . . Some are slow, / leaving you standing, resigned . . . / where no one you know stays. Others are sudden.□ The *s* sound appears again very effectively in stanza 3 in the phrases □seeing your brother swallow a slug□; □a skelf of shame□; □shedding its skin like a snake, my voice□; □classroom sounding just like the rest□; and □I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space / and the right place.□

The most important aspect of the construction of any loose blank verse poem such as □Originally□ is its nonintrusive formality, a style that not only avoids taking away from the message but also may be difficult to recognize on a first reading. Duffy divides the poem into three stanzas of eight lines each, but beyond that the construction is careful and subtle, leaving room for the more important matter of theme to come through.

Historical Context

That Duffy was born in Scotland but grew up in England has inspired much of her creative work on topics of personal and national origins. Especially early in her life, Duffy struggled to answer a basic question about her identity: Is she Scottish or is she English? While the relationship between the two nations spans many centuries, significant changes were taking place during the 1980s and 1990s, when Duffy composed the work that appears in *The Other Country* and it was published.

Scotland is one of four national units, along with England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, that make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several independent European dynasties formed political unions, and Scotland was among those self-governing nations that relinquished its sovereignty in favor of forming a more powerful union with allied nations. Regardless of what political entities do, the people of individual nations do not readily forsake their native culture, language, customs, and lifestyle—all the things that make them who they are, in this case, the things that make Scots Scottish.

For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, Scotland followed suit with the conservative government of Great Britain, even though a rogue party called the Scottish National Party sprouted up in the 1930s and quietly gained supporters for Scotland's independence from Great Britain. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Scottish National Party experienced a resurgence of support. For the first time in the twentieth century, the Labour Party became the largest political party in the country, and it has remained so.

During the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher was the highly influential and powerful prime minister of Great Britain. Although she was elected for an unprecedented three terms in office, her conservative government both angered and disillusioned liberal Scots, who were experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates in the United Kingdom. The country's main industries—coal mining, steel making, shipbuilding, and heavy engineering—all suffered under Thatcher's policies of privatization of state-owned companies. As they became increasingly disgruntled with the conservative rule of Great Britain, many Scots called for greater autonomy for their nation.

The Scottish National Party gained more favor during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the dominant Labour Party began to lobby the government in London for more areas of self-rule, not for total independence. In essence, Scotland wanted to have its own separate legal and educational systems, its own national church, and its own parliament with wide-ranging powers apart from those of Great Britain. While some members of Thatcher's Conservative Party balked at the idea, political factions in the kingdom's overall Labour Party pledged support for Scotland's bid for greater autonomy.

When, in 1989 and 1990, Thatcher's government introduced an unpopular poll tax to replace property taxes, many citizens across Great Britain were infuriated over what they considered excessive and unfair taxation. The discontent escalated to the point

that Thatcher resigned suddenly in 1990, and the remaining government, headed by John Major, was forced to revise its tax program.

The transition from a conservative majority to a liberal majority in Great Britain in the 1990s mirrored Scotland's shift in the same direction a few decades earlier. The ultimate payoff for Scotland came in 1997, when Tony Blair was elected prime minister and made greater Scottish autonomy one of the new government's principal objectives. As a result, Scotland eventually established a parliament to govern its own domestic affairs and to elect its own first minister. Jack McConnell was the first to hold that position.

There is an interesting similarity between Duffy's personal struggle with national identity and that of Scotland itself. Although the country is self-governed and reinforces its independent □Scottishness,□ Scotland is still part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The poet may reconcile her personal life in the same manner. She is both Scottish and English, or, perhaps more important, she is a Briton overall.

Critical Overview

Duffy's poetry has received wide critical acclaim since her first full-length collection, *Standing Female Nude*, was published in 1985, and she has been awarded various prizes for her work. Duffy is commonly noted as one of England's strongest poetic voices of the Thatcher years, particularly as a feminist, liberal, and controversial voice for underrepresented people on the fringe of society. Much of Duffy's earliest work, however, can be classified as love poetry, although gender is ambiguous in the first poems. Not until the publication of *Mean Time* in 1993 does Duffy clearly begin to address lesbian love and her own homosexual lifestyle. Whether it involves politics, nationalism, or romance, Duffy's work is generally received with enthusiasm and respect.

The Other Country is one of Duffy's most studied collections among critics, because its subjects are both personal and political, the poems often blurring the line between the two, demonstrating the interconnectedness of national identity and individual identity. This theme is the primary focus of most of the book's critics. In an essay titled □'Me Not Know What These People Mean': Gender and National Identity in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry,□ published in *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: Choosing Tough Words,* the scholar and critic Angelica Michelis writes, □The theme of 'afterwardsness' is a ubiquitous one in *The Other Country*: the different poems in this volume oscillate thematically between past, present and future interconnecting the personal history of the poet who moved from Scotland to England with that of national history and identity.□ Michelis points directly to the poem in question in stating, □To define oneself in relation to home, rather than stating a secure and known position, is here developed as a journey in time ('All childhood is an emigration' as Duffy puts it in the poem 'Originally') which propels the subject backwards as much as forwards from a temporal point of view.□

In a lecture titled □Notes from the Home Front: Contemporary British Poetry,□ published in *Essays in Criticism*, the writer and lecturer John Kerrigan addresses the issue of ambiguous identity in Duffy's work when he states

To say that Carol Ann Duffy hales from Scotland or London, however, would hardly be to the point, since she writes about living in Staffordshire and Liverpool, about the anonymity of rented rooms, and implies that, like many of us, she doesn't come from anywhere much, or anywhere, at least, in particular.

Kerrigan's conclusion is likely one of the most apt in capturing the essence of Duffy's message in her poems about emigration and □the other country□: □she doesn't come from anywhere much.□ But that has not kept her from carving her own definite place in contemporary British poetry.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Hill is the author of a poetry collection and an editor for a university publications department. In the following essay, she examines Duffy's use of physical displacement as a source of lifelong personal uncertainty and hesitation.

Many of Duffy's poems address the issue of national identity and originality, which, in most cases, are synonymous with personal identity and originality. Although it may be an exaggeration to say that the forced move from her native Scotland to England when she was a young child scarred her for life, there is no doubt that being uprooted at such a tender age had a profound effect on Duffy. At five, she was just old enough to grasp the effects. If she had been younger, she would have enjoyed the comfort of not understanding. If she had been older, she may have been able to rationalize her parents' decision and make the most of it. As it was, however, Duffy understood only the facts as she saw them: Everything she knew about the first five years of her life was soon to be gone forever.

□Originally□ deals with the topic of displacement head on. The title reflects the heart of the matter. The specific details of the move in stanza 1, the difficulties of adjusting to a new place in stanza 2, and the seeming resignation to change in stanza 3 all come together to make one central point: Displacement hurts, and the traumatic emotional effects of displacement on a child can last a lifetime.

In stanza 1, the speaker describes the actual physical move from one country to another. Her tone is both fearful and sorrowful as she recalls her brothers weeping, one of them especially hard. The boys are younger than the speaker, but they are able to sense what they may not fully comprehend. □*Home, / Home*,□ is the single cry, the single thought that fills their minds. The words □vacant□ and □blind□ are particularly revealing of the speaker's own thoughts. She equates the move with a feeling of loss and emptiness. No toy with □eyes□ can actually see, of course, but the speaker states, □I stared / at the eyes of a blind toy, holding its paw.□ Because a stuffed animal is sightless, there must be a reason that the speaker chooses to describe it as □blind.□ In the poem, blindness symbolizes the void, the blankness the speaker senses as the result of losing her home. Blindness also represents the □vacant rooms□ back in the house in which the speaker will never live again. In a sense, the toy is a reflection of the speaker herself: empty, lost, in need of comfort.

Stanza 2 of □Originally□ focuses on the difficulties that anyone, especially children, may face when moving to a new area with different customs and an unfamiliar form of native language. The speaker's acknowledgment that □All childhood is an emigration□ suggests a more mature perspective than that described in stanza 1, but an intellectual stance does little to alleviate the all-consuming sense of strangeness the speaker feels. Regardless of the type of emigration one may experience□□slow□ or □sudden,□ as the speaker distinguishes them□the fears and worries are the same. Both types thrust an unmistakable awareness of self-doubt and insecurity on the one who has emigrated from a beloved homeland to a peculiar new place.

Although the statement □All childhood is an emigration□ is philosophical in nature, the speaker gives specific examples of how a forced move can be emotionally disturbing. One may end up standing on a strange □avenue / where no one you know□ lives or speaking with a □wrong□ accent when everyone else seems to use the right one. Children in a new land may be both astonished and repulsed by some of the native children's customs, such as □big boys / eating worms,□ and sometimes the language barrier goes beyond odd accents into unfamiliar words altogether, □shouting words you don't understand.□ The speaker and her brothers endure these difficulties and eventually overcome them, as stanza 3 suggests, but enduring and overcoming the difficulties do not abolish them. For the speaker especially, the hardships remain in her memory. The passage of time may blunt most of the sting, but it does not heal it completely.

Lines 15 and 16 reiterate not only the speaker's but also the entire family's fear of displacement. The speaker's brothers' feelings are already established, and in these lines the speaker reveals her □parents' anxiety,□ a tension apparently so obvious that it is felt by the speaker herself. Describing the parents' anxiety in physical terms, □like a loose tooth / in my head,□ demonstrates how strong and how bothersome relocating can be for a child. Anyone who can recall losing his or her baby teeth at the age of five or six may remember the discomfort of having a wobbly tooth in the mouth for days or weeks before it actually comes out. Duffy's careful choice of words implies that the speaker is still very much a little girl, but she is trying to deal with some very grown-up worries and doubts. There is no doubt, however, about her ultimate conclusion: □*I want our own country*, I said.□

Line 17, the first line of stanza 3, may be a bit misleading in its suggestion of resignation to childhood emigration: □But then you forget, or don't recall, or change.□ This notion is brought out further in the speaker's admission that she soon loses her □shame□ upon seeing one of her brothers eat a worm as the English boys do and that her Scottish accent soon becomes watered down with an English one like that of her classmates. At this point, it seems that the trauma of moving from one country to another has faded for the children and that their gradual maturity helps ease the initial pain of leaving home. Perhaps they have come to feel at home in England? The end of the poem makes it clear that this is not the case, that the loss of national identity is indeed personal. More specifically, being displaced as a child can lead to a perpetual feeling of displacement as an adult.

There is an abrupt shift in thought in the final few lines of □Originally,□ beginning with the question, □Do I only think / I lost a river, culture, speech . . . ?□ The speaker has reached adulthood, as the word □Now□ in line 23 indicates. She has admitted her acceptance of certain changes in her life, both physical and emotional, and has hardened against the overt fears and worries of childhood insecurity. Nevertheless, she has not shaken the concerns entirely. Her self-doubt is subtler, and her sense of emptiness and loss is more ingrained, more a part of her psyche. As a grown woman capable of thinking profoundly, rationalizing, and philosophizing, the speaker may have abandoned her childish assertion □*I want our own country*,□ but she cannot shake the

underlying feeling that a part of her has been taken away at a young age and cannot be regained.

One may wonder why answering a simple question like □*Where do you come from*?□ would prove so difficult for the speaker in the poem. It is safe to assume that many readers have been asked the same question at some point in their lives and have had no problem responding with the name of a country, a state or province, a city or town, or a community. The chances are, though, that most readers of this poem were not uprooted at five years of age and moved to a new and unfamiliar culture. A sense of displacement is much greater for children who experience this scenario. In Duffy's case, it is great enough to last a lifetime.

The speaker makes it clear that she equates □first space□ with □right place,□ but because she did not get to live in the □right□ place for very long, she hesitates when trying to tell someone where she is from. Answering □I was born in Scotland and grew up in England□ would seem simple enough but is not necessarily so, especially when the speaker has experienced two very proud, very traditional national identities when she was only a child. The speaker wants to be able to answer the simple question, but what causes her to hesitate is the □originally□ factor. In other words, if the question asked of her were □Where do you live?□ she would likely answer without thinking twice. □*Where do you come from*?□ brings in new factors, such as national identity, personal identity, roots, ancestry, homeland. When these fundamentals of a human life are shaken up by displacement at a young age, the effects of insecurity and self-doubt a child displays early on will undoubtedly soften over time. For some, however, the uncertainty never goes away.

Source: Pamela Steed Hill, Critical Essay on □Originally,□ in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Adaptations

Trafalgar Square Books produced an audiocassette of Duffy's poetry collection *The World's Wife* in 1999, the year the book was published and considered for a Forward Prize in the collections category. The poems in this volume are written from the perspectives of the female companions of famous males, such as Sigmund Freud, King Kong, and the devil.

Topics for Further Study

If you moved from one town, state, or country to another when you were very young, write an essay about your experience. Explain what the greatest challenges were, how you adjusted, what significant lifestyle changes you made, and how you feel about the move now.

Many of Shakespeare's plays are packed with British history. Research a Shakespeare play that pertains to England and Scotland and select a brief section of it to act out in front of the class. Try to select a part of the play that gives a good idea of the relationship between the two nations, whether it is friendly or contentious.

Prime Minister Tony Blair is struggling to maintain a positive position as the leader of Great Britain. Pretend that you are Blair and give a speech to your class on how the policies you have set and the international role you have taken are beneficial to the British people in general and the Scots in particular, who continue to lobby for greater self-rule.

Write a poem from the perspective of a speaker who has been forced to move to an environment where the culture is vastly different from his or her original one. You may be a Chinese moving to Brazil, an American moving to Pakistan, a Nigerian moving to Canada, or anyone relocating to an unfamiliar environment anywhere in the world.

Compare and Contrast

1980s: Many Scots grow weary of Great Britain's conservative government, and the Scottish National Party gains momentum. The party wants greater autonomy for Scotland and less ruling by the British government seat in London.

Today: Although Scotland is still a prominent member of the United Kingdom, the country has its own parliament to run domestic affairs, such as establishing laws and setting taxes. Jack McConnell becomes the first minister of Scotland in 2001.

1980s: Less than 2 percent of the Scottish population can understand Gaelic, the language that prevailed before the British government's push to make English the official language throughout Great Britain. As Scottish-English develops over the centuries, its Gaelic influences decline, and it is hardly recognizable by Scots in the late twentieth century.

Today: In a move to retain national pride in language, many Scottish educators encourage students to speak in the rich Scottish dialects of old, a daring linguistic move for which students decades earlier would have been punished.

1980s: Despite being Great Britain's longest continuously serving prime minister in the twentieth century, Thatcher begins to lose popularity toward the end of the 1980s and resigns suddenly in 1990 after the controversial introduction of a community charge, or poll tax, to replace property taxes in Scotland in 1989 and in England and Wales in 1990.

Today: Because of his close relationship with the American president George W. Bush and his unwavering support for the United States-led war in Iraq, among other political issues, Prime Minister Tony Blair, once highly popular across the United Kingdom, faces increasing criticism, and many people demand that he resign.

What Do I Read Next?

Mean Time (1993) is considered one of Duffy's strongest and most mature collections. Appearing three years after *The Other Country*, this book also addresses themes of place and identity, but the focus is more on relationships, both sexual and social, between people as well as on self-examination and personal insight. This collection won the 1993 Whitbread Award for Poetry.

The collection *The Adoption Papers* (1991), by poet Jackie Kay, explores themes similar to Duffy's in regard to childhood memories and events. These semiautobiographical poems concern a black baby's adoption by a white family and are written from the perspectives of three persons: the natural mother, the adoptive mother, and the child. Kay and Duffy have been partners for more than twenty years and are raising Duffy's daughter together.

Hugo Young's *The Iron Lady: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (1989) was a bestseller in Great Britain and remains popular among those interested in the dynamic prime minister who became a global leader alongside the American president Ronald Reagan and the Soviet Union's leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Thatcher's years as the British head gave many of the United Kingdom's poets something to write about as she changed the face of the Conservative Party, waged battles with old-guard politicians and trade unions alike, ruled stoically during the Falklands War, and proved to be one of the most productive, though often-criticized, leaders in modern British history. Duffy became one of the kingdom's most popular and prolific poets during this time.

The Knitting Circle website maintains an up-to-date page on Duffy at http://myweb.lsbu.ac.uk/~stafflag/carolannduffy.html, with links providing extensive information on her life and publications as well as a bibliography of critical material, press clippings, and related websites.

Further Study

Dowson, Jane, and Alice Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

This comprehensive review of Great Britain's women poets of the twentieth century is an easy, accessible, and interesting read on this often overlooked group of British writers. The entire book is an excellent overview of the cultural, literary, political, and personal events that shaped the poets' work. Section 10, □Dialogic Politics in Carol Ann Duffy and Others,□ highlights Duffy's poetry.

Duffy, Carol Ann, *The Salmon Carol Ann Duffy: Poems Selected and New 1985-1999*, Salmon Publishing, 2000.

This collection is superb for readers interested in gaining a good perspective on Duffy's entire volume of work. It contains poems from *Standing Female Nude* (1985), *Selling Manhattan* (1987), *The Other Country* (1990), *Mean Time* (1993), and *The World's Wife* (1999) along with four poems at the end in a section titled simply □Stray Poems.□ That Duffy selected all the poems for this collection provides a bit of insight into the work she likes most or finds most important. □Originally□ is included.

Rees-Jones, Deryn, *Carol Ann Duffy*, Northcote House, 1999.

This study of Duffy's work from the 1980s and 1990s concentrates on issues of gender and identity in the work but also looks at the development of her love poetry and her use of the dramatic monologue as a style of writing. Rees-Jones makes a strong case for Duffy's innovative attempts at changing typical subjects, themes, and methods of modern British poetry into explicit personal, political, and social commentary.

Smith, Stan, □Suburbs of Dissent: Poetry on the Peripheries,□ in *Southwest Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4, 2001, pp. 533-51.

This long essay focuses on the works of poets who have moved away from traditional themes of □cozy□ nationalism into the realm of contemporary poets who express feelings of disconnection even in the supposedly □safe□ suburbs. The section of the article titled □Getting Nowhere□ refers to *The Other Country* and the experience of being the type of cultural hybrid Duffy writes about in □Originally.□

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Duffy, Carol Ann, "Originally," in *The Other Country*, Anvil Press, 1990, p. 7.

Kerrigan, John, "Notes from the Home Front: Contemporary British Poetry," in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. 54, No. 2, April 2004, p. 109.

Michelis, Angelica, "'Me Not Know What These People Mean': Gender and National Identity in Carol Ann Duffy's Poetry," in *The Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy: Choosing Tough Words,* edited by Angelica Michelis and Antony Rowland, Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 92.

BOOKRAGS

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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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