Persepolis: the Story of a Childhood Study Guide

Persepolis: the Story of a Childhood by Marjane Satrapi

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

A major achievement in comics narrative, Marjane Satrapi's first major work *Persepolis* debuted in France in 2000 to great fanfare. The first two French volumes were translated and reprinted together in the American volume *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* in 2003. Named after the capital city of the Persian Empire, the book is an autobiographical tale set during the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Iran-Iraq War in the 1970s and 1980s, told through a series of comics. It illustrates how civil strife within the country was as damaging, if not more so, than threats from abroad. *Persepolis* also dispels the one-dimensional stereotypes of Iran and Iranians, providing a complex picture of life under the regimes of both the Shah of Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Satrapi's unique position as a descendent of Persian royalty influences the narration, making it less a history and more a memoir in a historical setting. As a child, young Marji learns the history of Iran from family members who participated in important national turning points, enabling her to understand them in an intimate way. Factual details are transformed into details of the heart: how a deposed emperor's son is reduced to a broken man; how a broken marriage weighs more heavily than torture in prison; and how the children of Iran reflect the values of the adults around them.

Satrapi's artistic style is bold and straightforward, evoking the simplicity of childhood drawings and making her work immediately accessible to readers. However, she also uses a range of techniques and styles to capture different moods, alternative perspectives, and dramatic moments. In this way, her story balances the perspective of a child in wartime with the complex politics and morality of the adult world.

There are several kinds of war in *Persepolis*. The civil disobedience against the Shah of Iran leads to the Islamic Revolution, but the rise of the Islamic Republic government leads to a different kind of oppression that is again met with resistance—albeit in a more subtle, complex form. Satrapi casts a clear eye not only on how the Islamic Republic justifies its exceedingly harsh measures in the name of religion, but on how oppressed people assert their individuality in unexpectedly creative ways. When the war with Iraq starts in 1980, Satrapi notes the strange ways the civil unrest mixes with the national conflict.

Throughout *Persepolis*, a desire to live life to the fullest, to enjoy what one has even in the worst of times, is an integral concern. Readers witness contraband pop music and family celebrations, school pranks and moments of absurd irony. They also witness torture and propaganda, bombings and execution. This is indeed a very different, more complex image of Iranians: instead of Islamic fanatics who unthinkingly support the Ayatollah, they are a people who defiantly party in the face of political oppression and violent injustice, who know deep pain and suffering as well as ecstatic love and joy. As a child of these times, Satrapi captures the depth and breadth of her Iranian heritage.

Author Biography

Marjane Satrapi was born in Rasht, Iran, on November 22, 1969. Her maternal great-grandfather was Ahmad Shah Qajar, the last Qajar emperor of Iran before Reza Khan overthrew him in 1925 and took power. Satrapi's parents were very modern and progressive, and as a child Satrapi attended the Lycée Français, one of Tehran's finest schools. At the age of fourteen, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq War, Satrapi was sent to Austria by her parents. She returned four years later, after the war ended. Satrapi attended the College of Art at an Iranian university, earning a degree, and was married for a short time before divorcing and moving to France.

Earning wide critical praise and sales, the autobiographical *Persepolis* made Satrapi a major figure in European comics. In 2004, she published *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*, which takes up where the first book ends. *Poulet aux Prunes* (its French title) won the 2005 prize for Best Graphic Album (also known as Best Comic Book) at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, the most prestigious event in European comics.

Plot Summary

The Veil

Persepolis begins in Iran in the year 1979, when the Islamic Revolution takes place, and ten-year-old Marji's life is forever changed. Her bilingual school is closed, boys and girls are separated to different schools, and all girls must wear veils. Marji's mother protests against the veil, but when a picture of her appears in a local magazine, she disguises herself to avoid notice. Though from a very modern family, Marji is deeply religious from an early age and believes she is the last prophet of God: she writes her own holy book, which only her grandmother knows about. God speaks to Marji every night. One day at school, Marji tells everyone she wants to be a prophet. Her parents are not shocked when her teacher tells them, but when they ask Marji herself, she says she wants to be a doctor. That night she explains to God that she still wants to be a prophet but that her parents must not know.

The Bicycle

In 1979, the year of the revolution, Marji and her friends protest in the garden, pretending to be the famous revolutionaries Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Leon Trotsky. She learns about revolutionaries from books. Her favorite is the comic book *Dialectic Materialism*, in which Karl Marx, author of *The Communist Manifesto* and the father of Marxism, humorously refutes René Descartes, the father of modern philosophy. Marji notices that Marx and her vision of God look similar to each other, though Marx's hair is curlier. God continues to visit Marji, though she no longer wants to be a prophet because of the revolution. Marji eavesdrops on her parents talking in their bedroom, overhearing how the police sealed off the Rex Cinema and burned it down with four hundred people inside. While the tragedy is blamed on religious fanatics, everyone knows it is the Shah's fault. Marji knocks on her parent's door and tells them she wants to demonstrate in the streets with them tomorrow instead of in the garden. They do not allow it. Marji becomes upset when she discovers God does not come when she calls for Him.

The Water Cell

Marji's parents protest every day. She tells them she loves the king because he was chosen by God, but her father, Eby, gives her a quick history lesson about how the father of the current Shah, named Reza, organized a coup to overthrow the emperor and set up a republic. With the support of the British, he succeeded. Marji's father then reveals that the emperor that Reza overthrew was Marji's maternal great-grandfather. Reza made her grandfather prime minister, but he developed communist beliefs and was imprisoned. Marji's mother, Taji, picks up the story from there, describing how her father was placed in a water-filled cell for hours. When she was a child, Taji continues,

the police often came to the house to arrest her father. His time in prison eventually destroyed his health. Marji decides to take a long bath to try to feel what it is like to be in a water-filled cell.

Persepolis

In this chapter, titled the same as the book, Marji's grandmother arrives for a visit and Marji asks about her grandfather. Her grand-mother tells her that Reza had taken everything away from the family. She also tells her that while Reza was tough, his son (the current Shah) was even worse, making false promises and holding frivolous celebrations. Marji and her grandmother go to the kitchen for something to eat. Her grandmother speaks to Marji's mother and finds out Eby has not come home yet. He has been taking photos of the demonstrations every day, which is illegal; once, he only narrowly escaped arrest. He finally arrives home with a strange story about being at Rey hospital photographing a crowd carrying the body of a young man killed by the army. The body of an old man was also being carried on a stretcher. The crowd thought he was another martyr, but the widow explained he died of cancer. This did not deter the crowd from blaming the Shah, and the widow joined their demonstration. Marji's parents and grandparents laugh at this, but Marji does not understand why.

The Letter

Marji reads a great deal during this time. Her favorite author is a Kurd named Ashraf Darvishian. His stories of child workers make Marji aware of differences in social class, something made more personal because Marji's family has a maid named Mehri. Since childhood, Mehri has lived with and worked for the Satrapis, and since Marji was born, has helped raise her. In 1978, Mehri falls in love with the neighbor's son, Hossein. He sends her a letter but she is illiterate. Marji reads the letter to Mehri, and helps her write weekly letters to Hossein for six months. Word of the romance reaches Eby, who speaks with Hossein and reveals to him that Mehri is his maid, not his daughter. Hossein gives Eby the letters Marji wrote. Eby confronts Marji, who is confused about why he is keeping Mehri and Hossein apart. Mehri is upset, but now she sees a new purpose in the revolution. The two girls attend a demonstration but are seen after-wards by Marji's mother, who slaps them both for their foolish behavior. That day is eventually known as Black Friday, a day on which many protestors are killed.

The Party

After Black Friday, the Shah says he will concede to the people's will and head the nation toward democracy. However, his actions indicate different intentions. As protests worsen throughout the country, the Shah finally leaves. In the wake of the Shah's flight, strange things occur: the Shah's image is torn from school-books that once proclaimed him as a leader chosen by God; a neighbor falsely claims to have received an injury during the revolution; and the passions of the time cause some to seek not just

revolution, but retaliation. Marji hears from friends that the father of Ramin, a neighborhood boy, was in the SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, and killed a million people. Marji wishes to punish Ramin with a beating but her mother stops her and explains that Ramin should not be blamed for his father's actions. Marji seeks out Ramin to forgive him, but he claims his father killed communists, who are evil. Confused, Marji reports this to her mother and reminds herself to forgive.

The Heroes

Iran's political prisoners are liberated and considered heroes. Marji's family knows two of them, Siamak Jari and Mohsen Shakiba. Siamak's wife is Taji's best friend. When they were younger, Laly, Siamak's daughter, told Marji her father was away on a trip. Marji broke the news that he was probably dead, since she was told the same thing when her grandfather died. After the revolution, Siamak and his family visit Marji's family, as does Mohsen. Eby is surprised the two men know each other. They report that, while imprisoned, everyone knew everybody. Siamak and Mohsen describe how they were tortured, and how Ahmadi, one of Eby's college classmates, was tortured and executed. Marji tells Laly she is glad her father is alive, but points out that the whole "away on a trip" story was not exactly true. Laly furiously responds that her father is a hero. After hearing the horror stories of the former prisoners, Marji's mother yells, "All torturers should be massacred!" Playing with friends, Marji comes up with her own kinds of "torture games" and struggles to understand why her mother favors vengeance over forgiveness. She asks her mother about forgiveness, and her mother tells her it is not always a good thing. Unsure of justice or the world around her, Marji seeks solace in God.

Moscow

Though upset her father is not a hero, Marji is elated to find out her Uncle Anoosh has been let out of prison. Anoosh tells Marji his life story. At eighteen, he became the secretary of his Uncle Fereydoon, who proclaimed independence for the Iranian province of Azerbaijan and became Minister of Justice. When the Shah's soldiers captured Fereydoon, Anoosh fled to his parents' home before heading to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Fereydoon was imprisoned and executed, but not before conceiving a child with his girlfriend. In the Soviet Union, Anoosh married and had two children, but eventually got a divorce. Homesick, he tried to sneak back into Iran in a disguise but was recognized and imprisoned for nine years. Finishing his story, he puts Marji to bed and gives her a swan made of bread—a relic from his time in prison. She tells her friends of the heroes in her family, but her stories are too much for them.

The Sheep

When Eby and Anoosh discuss the possibility of an Islamic Republic government taking over Iran, Marji tells them the television claims 99.99 percent of the people voted in

favor of it. Eby, convinced the television report is a lie, becomes angry. Marji finds out Kaveh, a boy she likes, is moving to the United States. Many of Marji's relatives also move to the States. Taji, Marji's mother, ponders doing the same. Eby, however, is convinced that moving to the United States would mean settling for a career as a taxi driver, and having his wife work as a cleaning lady. Marji's family receives news that freed political prisoner Mohsen has been murdered, drowned in his bathtub. The sister of the other political prisoner they know, Siamak, is executed, and he flees the country with the rest of his family. The once-imprisoned revolutionaries have now become enemies of the new fundamentalist republic.

One day, Marji is told that Uncle Anoosh returned to Moscow. She does not believe it, and Eby eventually tells her the truth that Anoosh is imprisoned, awaiting execution. He is allowed only one visitor, and he asks for Marji. In his cell, Uncle Anoosh gives Marji a second bread-swan, and tells her that it is an uncle to the first swan. He is executed as a Russian spy shortly thereafter. God visits Marji in her room but she casts Him out, furious that God could allow her uncle to be murdered. Just as Marji feels completely lost, the first bombs of the Iran-Iraq War are dropped.

The Trip

Eby reads in the newspaper that fundamentalist students have occupied the American embassy and taken hostages, which means no more visas will be issued for travel to the United States. Marji's dream of seeing Kaveh again is squashed. The nation's universities are swiftly shut down because they do not adhere to Islam. Marji worries that she may never fulfill her other dream, to become a chemist. Days later, Marji's mother is threatened by two fundamentalist men, and the government soon announces that all women must wear veils in public. Men must also follow a new dress code adhering to Islam. When Marji's parents decide to attend a demonstration against fundamentalism, Taji says Marji must attend as well, to learn to defend her rights. The demonstration becomes violent and is the last one Marji and her parents attend. In September 1980, Marji and her parents take a vacation to Spain and Italy. They see Iran in the news but do not understand the broadcast because it is in Spanish. Returning home, Marji's grandmother tells them Iran is officially at war with Iraq. Marji wants to fight for her country.

The F-14s

Marji is with her father in his office when she sees Iraqi jets bombing Tehran, the capital of Iran. They rush home to check on her mother. On the drive, Marji asks her father if he will fight the Iraqis, but he believes the true problem is their own government. They arrive home to find Taji in the shower. Marji believes Iran should bomb Baghdad, but the current Islamic government has imprisoned all the pilots after a failed coup attempt. This includes the father of Marji's classmate Pardisse. Marji and her parents hear the national anthem on television, and are stunned; it had been forbidden by the new government. The local news announces a bombing raid on Baghdad, but Eby checks

the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) to verify. He is elated to find out the bombing raid is real, but the BBC adds that the Iranian pilots agreed to attack Iraq only if their government agreed to broadcast the national anthem. In the end, half the Iranian planes do not return. Two weeks later, Marji finds out Pardisse's father was among the casualties. When her class is assigned to write about the war, Marji writes a history of Arab conquest while Pardisse writes a letter to her father. Marji tries to console Pardisse by telling her that her father is a true hero. Pardisse responds by saying, "I wish he were alive and in jail rather than dead and a hero."

The Jewels

Groceries and gasoline have grown scarce. At a gas station, Marji and her parents learn that the refinery in Abadan has been bombed. Taji's childhood friend Mali lives in Abadan with her family, and later that night they arrive at Marji's house. They stay for a week with Marji's family, as the only items they were able to save—jewelry—are sold off to start a new life. One day, at the supermarket, they overhear two women blaming the food shortage on the southern Iranian refugees, whom they say are willing to whore themselves out for whatever they need. Mali is upset because losing one's home to Iraqis is bad enough, but "to be spat upon by your own kind, it is intolerable!"

The Key

While the Iraqis have better technology, Iran has more soldiers. There are so many casualties that traditional nuptial chambers—totems by which dead unmarried men symbolically "attain carnal knowledge"—fill the streets. In school, Marji and her classmates must beat their breasts twice a day for the war martyrs. Marji and her friends make fun of this and other pro-government events at school. Meanwhile, young boys are being recruited to join the army, including the son of their current maid, Mrs. Nasrine. She tells Marji and Taji that her son was given a gold-painted plastic key at school, and was told it would get him into heaven if he was fortunate enough to die fighting for Iran. Taji tries to convince Mrs. Nasrine's son of the seriousness of the situation, but to no avail. Marji is invited to a party at her cousin Peyman's house the next week. Peyman is not aware of the "keys to paradise" being given out at school and Marji realizes it is just the poor students being recruited. Another cousin, Shahab, who began his military service right before the war, visits Taji and Marji. He tells them how poor boys are sent to the front line, worked up to a frenzy with promises of heaven, then led onto the battlefield to die. Soon after, Marji attends her first party at a friend's house.

The Wine

Tehran becomes a target of Iraqi bombing. Everyone runs to the basement during alarms, then checks on family and friends afterwards. Marji's mother tapes the windowpanes and hangs black curtains on the windows, not only to secure glass from bombing, but also to keep neighbors from spying and reporting to the Guardians of the

Revolution, the fundamentalist soldiers who monitor all citizens. Though forbidden, parties occur out of psychological necessity, including one thrown by Marji's uncle to celebrate the birth of his child. Sirens warning of an air strike end the party early. The Guardians of the Revolution stop Marji's family as they return home from the party. After smelling alcohol on Eby's breath, the Guardians follow them home to search the apartment. Eby instructs Marji and her grand-mother to run ahead so they can flush the alcohol down the toilet while he stalls the guards. Eby finally enters the apartment alone, and tells them that all he had to do to keep the guard away was bribe him. He is disheartened to find out all their wine has already been flushed away.

The Cigarette

Two years into the war, Marji has grown used to government propaganda. When the bell rings for school one day, she ditches class and accompanies some older girls to Kansas, a Western-style restaurant and hangout. There they meet boys who follow them until air sirens go off. Marji returns home where her mother confronts her for skipping school. Marji resists and calls her "the Guardian of the Revolution of this house!" Meanwhile, Iraq proposes a settlement to hostilities but the Iranian government refuses so that their regime can stay in power. The regime becomes more repressive and executes more dissidents. Marji performs her own act of rebellion by smoking her first cigarette, leaving her childhood behind.

The Passport

It is July 1982. Uncle Taher is glad he sent his son abroad instead of keeping him in Iran to fight and die. At home, Eby and Taji are amazed at the idea of sending a child away at fourteen, but Marji argues that by that age, children do not need parents anymore. Then they receive news that Taher has had another heart attack. They go to the hospital, seeing many wounded veterans, and find out a grenade thrown near Taher's house caused the heart attack. Taher needs surgery in England, but requires a permit for his passport. Eby rushes to Khosro, who was imprisoned with Anoosh during the Shah's rule, and orders a counterfeit passport. Meanwhile, Niloufar, a communist girl, hides in Khosro's house. Before Khosro can make the passport, Niloufar is found, arrested, and executed. Khosro escapes to Sweden. Uncle Taher dies, and he is buried on the same day his real passport arrives.

Kim Wilde

Marji's parents go on a trip to Turkey and ask if she wants anything from there. She asks for several items, including posters of Kim Wilde and Iron Maiden. Her parents get the posters and sew them inside the lining of Eby's coat. They pass customs and deliver their gifts to Marji. Marji goes out to buy Kim Wilde and Camel cassette tapes from the black market. On her way home, women from the Guardians of the Revolution, who spot the various signs of decadence she is wearing (sneakers, denim jacket, Michael

Jackson button), stop her. She lies and breaks down weeping in order to be let go. She does not tell her mother what happened for fear that her mother will not let her go out alone again. In her room, she dances to her Kim Wilde tape, which the Guardians had not found.

The Shabbat

Rumors circulate of Iraqi ballistic missiles, and soon, these missiles assault Tehran. Marji's family no longer runs to the basement since it will not make a difference, as it offers no protection from that kind of firepower. Many flee the city, but Marji's family stays, as do their Jewish neighbors, the Baba-Levys. Marji knows their daughter, Neda. One day while Marji is out shopping with her friend Shadi, she hears news of a missile hitting her neighborhood. She rushes home and finds her mother safe, but the Baba-Levy's home is destroyed. Since it was a Saturday—the Jewish Sabbath—Marji's mother mentions that they were supposed to be home, but says that they were probably out and tries to hurry her daughter away. As they pass the rubble, Marji sees Neda's bracelet in the debris, still attached to some unidentifiable part of her body.

The Dowry

Marji is kicked out of school for knocking over the principal. She starts attending another school, but gets in trouble there for questioning the Islamic Republic's propaganda. While her father is proud of her defiance, her mother is alarmed, not wanting Marji to be killed like Anoosh. Marji discovers that since the murder of virgins is forbidden by law, Guardians of the Revolution "marry"—that is, rape—young women prisoners before executing them. As Iranian tradition has the groom pay a dowry to the wife's family, the "husband" soldier sends a small amount of money to the girl's family. This is what happened to Niloufar, she finds out. It is a fact that haunts Marji. A week later, Marji's parents tell her they are sending her to school in Austria for her own safety and happiness. They tell her that they will visit her in a few months, and as the day of her departure grows near, she realizes that they will never move away from Iran. Marji fills a jar with the soil of her homeland to keep with her. She says goodbye to her friends, and her grandmother sleeps with her the night before she leaves. Marji's parents take her to the airport. As she leaves, Marji turns around and sees that her mother has fainted in her father's arms.

Themes

Civil Strife and National Conflict

The situation in Iran at the time Satrapi recounts is complex, as there are two kinds of war taking place. The first is the internal struggle between Iran's people and its government, as the oppressive regime of the Shah gives way to the oppressive regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Second is the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988, which begins one-third of the way through the volume and is more clearly defined as a war.

Often, the seemingly contradictory natures of the two wars are brought into stark relief by Satrapi. When the war with Iraqi heats up, Marji and her father are struck by a wave of patriotism when the national anthem—which was banned under Khomeini's regime—is played on television. They later discover that the fighter pilots imprisoned by the government for a failed coup demanded the anthem be broadcast before they would agree to fight for their country. Though fundamentalism and secularism compromise with each other to protect the country from an outside threat, national unity nonetheless remains impossible.

Social Protest

Civil strife in *Persepolis* occurs in two phases: outright demonstrations against the Shah of Iran and more subtle forms of dissent when the Islamic Republic government takes over. Marji's parents are dedicated demonstrators against the Shah, but their secular politics place them in danger when the fundamentalist tenets of Islam become the basis of the new Islamic Republic of Iran. The book illustrates one of the great ironies of the Islamic Revolution, that the political prisoners held by the Shah became freed heroes, only to be executed shortly thereafter by the new government's Islamic Guardians of the Revolution.

Given the extreme cruelty of the fundamentalists, protests change from public mass demonstrations to small signs of resistance. Satrapi employs a chart to illustrate differences in appearance between fundamentalists and progressives. Progressive Iranians express their freedom by holding illegal parties and drinking alcohol. This is dangerous and could incur great punishment, but the demand to enjoy life often makes it worth the risk. "In spite of all the dangers, the parties went on. 'Without them it wouldn't be psychologically bearable,' some said. 'Without parties, we might as well just bury ourselves now,' added the others."

This was especially true for young people in Iran, who sought individual freedom and tested the limits of what they could achieve (or get away with). Initially, Marji wants to participate in the demonstrations that her parents are involved in, but as they grow more dangerous, and as she grows older, the focus of her rebellion changes. As she approaches adolescence, Marji understands rebellion in personal terms, going to the

restaurant, Kansas, with some older girls, listening to banned pop music, and, when caught by her mother cutting class, calling her "Dictator!" Though extreme in its comparison, the exchange has the emotional resonance of any teenager experiencing parental difficulties.

War from a Child's Perspective

This story is told from the point of view of a young Iranian girl, so the perspective is markedly different from the typical accounts of war and revolution found in literature. There is very little exact information regarding major events, emphasizing this as a personal account of a historical time as opposed to an objective historical account with facts and dates. In addition, things that may seem important to readers from other cultures are not nearly as important from young Marji's perspective. Perhaps most striking to readers from the United States, the American hostage crisis—still one of the defining events in America's understanding of Iran—is dealt with in a single page. The hostage crisis itself is not important to the Satrapis (though they disagree with the fundamentalist students behind it), but the consequence that visas to visit America are no longer available is important.

As a child, Marji is an open vessel for knowledge. Readers learn the history of Iran through the stories Marji hears from relatives such as her grandmother, her parents, and Uncle Anoosh. Since her family is descended from royalty, there is an intimacy to what would otherwise be remote historical events, and often, the historical stories somehow feature Marji's relatives. We also see Marji and her friends repeat what they have heard from various sources of the adult world like school, television, their parents, even thirdhand accounts of what someone else has heard. At one point Uncle Anoosh defends Marji by saying, "She's just a child who repeats what she hears!" Later, Marji becomes wiser about propaganda, but it takes time and a certain awareness of the world for such understanding to take place.

Moral Uncertainty

Politics does not always make sense to Marji, but adult behavior in general does not make sense to her. Things that would take on added significance to an adult—the ironies of the revolution, an uncle's heartbreak overshadowing his political oppression—are not fully understood by Marji, and as a result are never fully explained. This provides a distinct view of a culture in turmoil that never becomes overwhelmingly complex.

Open to all of the perspectives she hears, Marji points out the contradictions of wartime morality without the accompanying rationalizations adults give. For example, after the revolution, Marji's teacher tells her to rip out the picture of the Shah in her textbook. She is confused, because the same teacher praised the Shah before the revolution. Marji does not understand the political advantages in changing one's allegiances, as she sees the world in black and white, which is echoed in the visual style of Satrapi's comics.

When Marji's mother hears of the torture her friends have endured, she demands that all torturers be massacred. Just before, she had advised Marji to forgive. Marji asks her mother why they should not forgive the torturers as well. Marji's mother gives a vague reply: "Bad people are dangerous but forgiving them is dangerous too. Don't worry, there is justice on earth." If anything, however, this makes Marji less sure of what "justice" really means.

It is significant that the main source of moral certainty is the character of God. He begins the story close to Marji and then appears less frequently during the revolution. Finally, Marji orders God away after her Uncle Anoosh is executed—a symbolic loss of faith and sureness in morally compromised times.

Class Differences

In *Persepolis*, Marji becomes aware of class differences and when she finds out she is among the privileged, she is ashamed. During the Iran-Iraq War, young boys from poor families are recruited to die on the front lines while families that are more affluent are protected from such recruitment. This is the focus of the chapter "The Key," where poor boys are promised access to heaven if they die for their country.

This results in one of the most powerful visual moments of the book. The page consists of two panels: the top two-thirds of the page contain the first panel, where faceless black silhouettes of soldiers are blown up in minefields with their plastic "keys to paradise" dangling around their necks. The bottom third is devoted to a second panel, showing Marji's first party. The characters at the party are individuals, not faceless strangers or silhouettes. They are frozen in midair like the soldiers in the minefield, but these children are dancing to music. In addition, where the soldiers had keys to paradise dangling around their necks, Marji has a "decadent" punk rock necklace of chains and nails. In this manner, the contrast between two kinds of childhood is conveyed. One is moderately safe from danger and filled with the joy and energy of youth; the other is filled with sacrifice, war, and anonymous death.

Historical Context

The Pahlavi Dynasty

In 1921, Reza Khan helped stage a successful coup to unite Iran. Starting out as a successful military leader, he eventually became prime minister. In 1925, the National Assembly deposed the emperor Ahmad Shah Qajar and installed Khan as the new Shah. He renamed himself Reza Shah Pahlavi, ending the Qajar Dynasty and ushering in the Pahlavi Dynasty. Though the British played a role in his ascent, there is also evidence that he defied British intervention as he implemented modern ideas and technology. His overbearing style of rule caused disapproval among many Iranians, but the Shah also oversaw the construction of major highways and railways, as well as the University of Tehran.

As World War II erupted throughout Europe, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union feared that Iran, with its valuable oil resources, would become an ally of Nazi Germany. In 1941, propaganda against Reza Shah forced him to abdicate, making his son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, become the new Shah of Iran. The new Shah was deposed in 1953 by Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, but was soon brought back to power with the help of the United States and Great Britain. To maintain power in coming decades, the Shah abolished the multi-party system and set up his own secret police, the SAVAK, who became infamous for their human rights abuses. The Shah continued the modernization of Iran started by his father and sought to make his country a major regional power. This included a lavish coronation ceremony in 1967, a buildup of the military, and a transformation of the economics of oil production.

While the Shah sought to quell political dissent, he did not succeed. Civil unrest grew in the mid-1970s, until the Islamic Revolution forced him into exile on January 16, 1979. He died on July 27, 1980, in Egypt, where Anwar Sadat welcomed him in exile after President Jimmy Carter refused to grant asylum for the Shah and his family in the United States.

The Islamic Revolution

Demonstrations against the Shah of Iran escalated in the late 1970s as human rights violations under the SAVAK were compounded by an economic crisis initiated by the changed oil economy. Several key events helped worsen the conditions. On August 19, 1978, a fire at the Rex Cinema in Abadan killed four hundred people and rumors spread that the SAVAK were responsible. Demonstrations intensified, leading to September 8, which became known as Black Friday when soldiers fired at demonstrators, killing many. Lastly, the exiled dissident Ayatollah Khomeini was allowed to relocate from Najaf, Iraq, to Paris, France, where he was better able to utilize his considerable influence and set himself up as the expected replacement for the Shah.

Khomeini returned from his exile on February 1, 1979, though his future role was not what observers expected. Under the influence of Khomeini and his devout followers, it was decided that Iran would be guided by Islam instead of the more secular policies of the Shah. A new constitution was written that made Khomeini the Supreme Leader of Iran, a position that allowed him to mold the nation politically. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran became a reality, forcing fundamentalist beliefs on a populace who had grown used to a more secular, if oppressive, government.

The Iran-iraq War

As the two major powers of the Persian Gulf, Iran and Iraq achieved a delicate balance of peace through the Algiers Accord of 1975. However, the fall of the Shah and the rise of the Islamic Republic destabilized the situation. On September 22, 1980, Iraq invaded Iran as a preemptive measure, a limited war that escalated when Iran retaliated. Iraq received support from other nations during this time, including the United States (which had lost its previous influence in Iran, as witnessed by the American hostage crisis), Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France. They also had the support of other Arab nations, as Iran was encouraging rebellion among the Shi'ites—people who belong to the Shi'a denomination within Islam and are in the minority—in neighboring areas. In 1982, with Saudi Arabia's financial assistance, Iraq offered to end the war but Iran refused. Khomeini wished to take over the region and change the systems in place in the Middle East.

The Iran-Iraq War was one of the deadliest since World War II, with the tides of war turning from one side to the other throughout the years of fighting. Both sides used chemical and biological warfare as well as missile attacks. Soldiers were often used as cannon fodder and mine field scouts, as human wave attacks relied on sheer numbers of men over modern technological tactics.

The financial cost of such a protracted struggle had its effects on both countries, while ongoing rifts within the Iranian government provoked the need for resolution. After eight years of fighting, a cease-fire was finally agreed upon in 1988, but not without attacks on both sides to affirm their bad feelings in spite of the war's official end.

Critical Overview

Persepolis was internationally praised for its intimate account of life in Iran during the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. Critics noted the way it combined a child's sense of wonder and simplicity, a cutting sense of humor, and an unflinching look at the brutality of violent events. Generally, critics regarded the art as purposively intensifying to the story, as Gloria Emerson wrote in the *Nation:* "Sometimes the drawings brilliantly show the unspeakable anxiety that afflicts Iranians."

However, Joy Press, writing for the *Village Voice*, unfavorably compared the black-and-white panels to "Michael Moore's silly two-minute gloss on American history in *Bowling for Columbine*—cute, but lacking insight."

Because of its subject matter and medium, *Persepolis* was most often compared to another work of autobiographical comics tied to world history: Art Spiegelman's animal allegory of the Holocaust, *Maus*. European nations such as France and Italy have a long tradition of widely recognized comic book creators, and do not consider comics an unusual medium for mature storytelling. However, comics are still considered something of a novelty in the United States. Carol Anne Douglas, writing for *off our backs*, approached the book with that common American viewpoint, initially skeptical about a comic book telling such as serious story. However, after reading *Persepolis*, she changed her mind:

Her books show that graphic novels can provide a great deal of information—in this case, with a highly political viewpoint—in a very accessible way. I suspect many people who otherwise wouldn't read a book on fundamentalism in Iran will read and learn from her books.

Critics have especially remarked on the unique depiction of Iranians, and how it runs contrary to stereotypes long held about the nation and its people. Satrapi shows the range of opinions and beliefs within the Iranian people, as well as the contradictions included in some of their beliefs—including her young self. Prefacing an interview with Satrapi for the comics website Newsarama.com, Daniel Robert Epstein noted that "this book should be required reading. It shows that even in the 'us' and 'them' scenario, 'them' often has many facets—and many individual faces."

While critics agree that Satrapi did a great service by humanizing Iran in the reader's eyes, some felt that it would be too simple to excuse Iranians for what happened in their country. Because Iranian politics is still often controversial and the government continues to operate as an Islamic Republic, some take issue with how Satrapi portrays her country as being commanded by a small group of religious zealots. Emerson notes that Satrapi may be naive in blaming the actions of her nation on an extremist minority, contending, "But there weren't just a few. Surely she remembers the joy felt by thousands of Iranians during the 1979–81 hostage crisis. Collaboration with the mullahs was widespread." However, Emerson adds, "What Satrapi hopes to do is defend her country, and her beguiling memoir should accomplish this for many readers."

Though lauded for the unique perspective it provided for Western readers, *Persepolis* is by no means alone during the early twenty-first century in showing Iran from the inside. It is part of a growing body of literature by Iranian women, often discussing Iranian culture with insights previously unknown to the West. These works include Azar Nafisi's memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and Farnoosh Moshiri's novel *The Bathhouse*.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

In the following excerpt, Douglas explains how Satrapi's upbringing in Iran and her political views shape Persepolis.

Her books are enjoyable, although that is certainly a strange word to use to describe books that tell about murders, torture, and the repression of an entire population, particularly women. But Satrapi has such a sly sense of humor that she makes her points with bitter laughter in the background. That's the only way to bear oppression, she says in some of her graphic stories.

Her first book tells about her childhood as an upper-class girl whose family, many of whom were communists, opposed the Shah. She and they supported the revolution, which they thought would bring about democracy or the rule by the proletariat, only to find that the result was a fundamentalist Islamic republic that was more repressive than they could have imagined.

Then, in 1981, Iraq attacked Iran and the fundamentalist Iranian Government urged everyone to fight and become martyrs. During the eight-year war, the Iraqi military killed 1 million Iranians. But at one point when Saddam Hussein wanted to end the war, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini refused because it had become a holy war. Teachers held daily sessions in which children were supposed to hit themselves to show their sympathy with the martyrs.

Apparently Satrapi was always rebellious and full of pranks that could have landed her in jail. She even struck a teacher who treated her badly. Her parents sent her to Austria because they feared she was likely to wind up imprisoned, raped, and executed if she stayed in Iran (it's against the law to execute a virgin in Iran, so jailers rape virgins before they kill them).

Satrapi is no friend of U.S. imperialism, either. She observes that the CIA interfered in Iran in the 1950s and suggests that the West set Iran and Iraq against each other, arming them both because it wanted to reduce both countries' power. Men she knows who were tortured under the Shah's regime because they were leftists said their torturers were trained by the CIA (the same men were freed briefly after the revolution, then were executed by the Islamic Republic because they were leftists). She now lives in France.

Source: Carol Ann Douglas, "*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood:* Growing Up Rebellious in Iran," in *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 35, No. 3-4, March-April 2004, pp. 63-64.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Freund discusses how Satrapi uses her book and comic strip as a form of retaliation against the strict Iranian norms she grew up with.

As of 2005, Satrapi is at work on an animated adaptation of *Persepolis* for French television.

A teenager's rebellious night on the town, if the town was Tehran in its early days under the mullahs, meant a trip to Kansas. That was a burger joint on Jordan Avenue, a place where the city's upscale sons and daughters set the tone and controlled the culture. Kansas was a redoubt of available coolness, a place where you could hang out, slouch west, and of course risk arrest.

Kansas and its burgers have achieved a certain degree of world fame now, along with other small-scale, dally-life efforts by Tehran's teens to squirm beyond the control of the regime's vice police. That renown comes thanks to the work of Persian-born artist Marjane Satrapi. In her autobiographical graphic novel *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Pantheon), Satrapi raises the question of why the repressive regime let a place like Kansas remain open. Was it to give some kids a place to let off steam? Site thinks not. "They probably hadn't the slightest idea what 'Kansas' was," she writes.

Persepolis is in many ways the perfect act of revenge by Satrapi against the Islamism that distorted her childhood, and not merely because she is now free to portray Iran's regime in all its righteous sadism. Satrapi, who now lives and works in France, obviously tells her tales in pictures, violating Islam's anti-iconic strictures. (Actually Persian Muslims historically ignored those strictures and created impressive art miniatures.) She even portrays God visually, assigning him attributes, which is heretical even without pictures. Indeed, she goes so far as to recount her own childish hopes of attaining prophethood, a thoroughly un-Islamic ambition.

The 33-year-old Satrapi surely must take satisfaction in such revenge, if for no other reason than the manner in which the regime allowed her to "study" art. Female models in her class were forced to pose in chadors that kept them completely hidden. When the students requested a male model—fully dressed, of course—so they could at least see and draw clothed human limbs, a vice cop instructed the students not to look at the model. Maybe Satrapi learned to draw by inference: She has drawn the regime itself, at least as it is revealed in the contorted lives that her characters are forced to endure. Her use of an intentionally naive visual style to tell a story often filled with fear and death only intensifies the power of her tale.

That story is not only about the power of mullahs, of course; it is about the Iran-Iraq war, the difficult lives of dissident leftist intellectuals, and other unhappy aspects of contemporary Iran. Satrapi writes that she doesn't want "those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under

various oppressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and leave their homeland to be forgotten."

Source: Charles Paul Freund, "Subversive Style: Resisting the Mullahs with Nail, Polish, Rock Music, and Great Novels," in *Reason*, October 2003, pp. 64-65.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Kutschera explains that Satrapi began writing and publishing her Persepolis *comic strip in order to educate the world about Iranian culture*.

Marjane Satrapi is no ordinary young woman, she is a full fledged princess. And not only a princess, but what some people might call a 'Red princess': born into a progressive family, she was reading cartoons about Marxism when other children were reading fairy tales. Her maternal grandfather was the son of Nasreddine Shah, the last Qadjar emperor of Iran.

Growing up, she was surrounded by relatives and family friends regularly thrown into jail for being communists. Today, she holds no brief for either the Islamic regime or the monarchy it displaced.

The child of intellectual parents, she was sent to Europe in the mid-1980s, at the age of 14, to be spared the oppression of an Islamic regime then at its worst. Running away from the prejudices of the Iranian mullahs, she was faced with the preconceived ideas held by Europeans on Iran and Islam. Her observations have resulted in a wonderful series of comic strips published under the name *Persepolis*, the first two volumes of which have sold more than 20,000 copies in their French version.

"I wanted to put a few things straight," explains Marjane from her studio at Place des Vosges, one of the oldest districts of Paris. "When I arrived in France, I met many people who expected me to speak Arabic. So many Europeans do not know the difference between Arabs and Iranians. They don't know anything of our centuries-old culture.

"They seem to think Iran has always been a country of religious fundamentalists, that Iranian women either have no place in society or that they are hysterical black crows. In fact, Iranian women are not downtrodden weeds: my mother's maid has kicked out her husband, and I myself have slapped several men who behaved inappropriately in the street. And even during the worst period of the Iranian Revolution, women were carrying weapons," Marjane declares with conviction.

While no fan of revolution or the current ruling regime, Marjane stresses that neither was she a supporter of the exiled Shah. "Many people in Europe venerate the Shah; I personally do not … True, we had some luxury Hilton hotels and a few kilometers of highways, but when he left, half the Iranian population was illiterate and living in utter poverty, which was unacceptable in a country with so much oil."

What gives *Persepolis* credibility is the convincing way specific events are interpreted through the eyes of a 10 year-old girl. For example, the young Marjane of the comic strip—the heroine of these very autobiographical books—explains how she did not know what to think about the veil when it became compulsory after the revolution.

Her cartoons portray young girls in the schoolyard sharing the same dilemma. Her drawings are simple but stylised and effective; they carry a message everybody understands and usually evoke a smile of pleasure. This is what gives her work its unique flavour, while they can be didactic and political, still, both the text and the drawings provide the reader with a wry pleasure.

How can Marjane Satrapi re-create with accuracy and authenticity the feelings and behaviour of the little girl she long ago ceased to be? "Don't forget I left my parents when I was 14. I was in a foreign country, alone. I spent a lot of time thinking about what my parents used to tell me; I suppose I am immersed in my past." Marjane Satrapi could never be considered 'politically correct', which is probably what makes her work so convincing; she is not another exile denigrating the Islamic revolution and glorifying the Shah's regime.

In the first volume of *Persepolis* she tells the story of her family and how they lived through the revolution which ousted the Shah—not sparing her readers the pleasure of a few scathing drawings and gibes about the Shah's father, Reza Khan, an "illiterate petty officer" who wanted to establish a republic and was convinced by his British mentors to found an empire. Marjane's schoolmistress tells her that the emperor was chosen by God, but her father tells the little girl that when he came to power 'the emperor' confiscated all the belongings of her forefathers, the Qadjars. Her grandmother tells the small heroine of the comic strip how the family were so poor they had nothing to eat, but how in order that the neighbours would not guess how bad things were, she would boil water to make them believe she was cooking.

Through her cartoons, the young heroine also introduces us to the champions of her childhood. The young Marjane overheard conversations between her parents about the torture in the Shah's jails. Among all the heroes discussed, one fascinated the small girl more than any other. Uncle Anouche, who was involved with Great Uncle Fereydoune in establishing the short-lived independent republic of (Iranian, pro-Soviet) Azerbaijan in 1946.

None of her school friends could boast such heroes in their families. But only a few months after the Islamic revolution, a new wave of repression swept away all these militant heroes. Some chose exile, others were murdered, while Uncle Anouche, who always believed the situation would improve, was sent back to prison—this time by the Islamists—and later executed as a 'Russian spy'. The last person to visit Anouche in jail was Marjane, a tragically memorable experience for a 10 year-old girl …

The second volume of *Persepolis* records details of Marjane's life during Iran's war with Iraq, which coincided with the harshest years of the Islamic Republic. The air raids, the refugees, the *Bassijis* (volunteers for the front), and the patrols of the *pasdars*, checking women were wearing the veil and searching homes for illegal cassettes and alcohol, all provide material for her work. During those troubled years, slowly but surely, the small Marjane becomes a teenager—and a rebel. Her parents decide it will be safer to send her to Europe, to Austria, claiming they will follow her after a while. They did not.

Marjane became a lonely exile—which, she says, she will discuss in the third volume of *Persepolis* the subject of her fourth volume has been earmarked for her return home to Iran.

"How does one manage to live in exile?" she asks rhetorically and answers herself. "To become integrated, one must forget entirely where one comes from. I had hard times—my parents had no more money to support me. My friends at the French lycée in Vienna were rich kids; I could not stand their expressions when I told them I was Iranian. Ah … Khomeiní, ah … the ayatollahs, the veil … I could read it in their faces. I even went as far as denying my nationality," Marjane admits. "For a while I said that I was French but I was young and stupid," she excuses herself with a self-deprecatory shrug. Today Marjane Satrapi is proudly Iranian—and she can also be proud for having written and drawn a series of comic strips that reveal more about contemporary Iran than many academic books.

Source: Chris Kutschera, "Every Picture Tells a Story," in *Middle East*, April 2002, pp. 49-50.

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Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

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Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) 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, NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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

NfS 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 Novels 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 NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS 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 Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels 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 NfS 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." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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:

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331–3535