Play with a Tiger Study Guide

Play with a Tiger by Doris Lessing

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Doris Lessing wrote *Play with a Tiger* in 1958, some time before it was staged and published in 1962. She wrote it while working on *The Golden Notebook* and a third novel of the *Children of Violence* series. The action of the play resembles a section of *The Golden Notebook*, as it presents a similar contrast of characters. Anna Freeman of *Play with a Tiger* resembles Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook*, and Dave Miller, with whom Anna is in love in the play, resembles a character who appears near the end of *The Golden Notebook*, with whom Anna Wulf falls in love. Both of Lessing's Annas are highly serious women grappling with the major political questions of the day, and they are both unhappy about the traditional societal roles of men and women. These women resist marriage because they believe that the institution as it stands is a trap for women, and they experiment beyond the bounds of monogamous love. But whereas *The Golden Notebook* is about a long period in its heroine's life, *Play with a Tiger* covers just a few hours.

Play with a Tiger received mixed reviews when it was first staged. Further, since Lessing is known as a writer of novels and short stories, not as a playwright, *Play with a Tiger* and her few other plays receive considerably less scholarly attention than her novels and short stories.

Play with a Tiger dramatizes the difficulties of having high ideals and trying to live by them with as little compromise as possible. Anna turns out to be the strongest person of the play, but even she must compromise in certain situations. Further, she suffers a great deal for her convictions, as Lessing shows how people who depart from societal norms, and who are different, suffer loneliness and scorn. *Play with a Tiger* is no longer in print, although it is likely to be available at most any large library.

Author Biography

Doris Lessing was born Doris May Tayler, in Persia (later renamed as Iran) to English parents on October 22, 1919. Her family then moved to Southern Rhodesia (later renamed as Zimbabwe) in Southern Africa, in 1924. There, Lessing left school at the age of thirteen, began working at fifteen, and began a longtime involvement with Marxist politics. She was attracted to Marxism's focus on workers' rights. Further, in its Southern African form, Marxist politics was focused on the rights of blacks. The indigenous black populations in the region had been subjugated since the period of European colonialism. Lessing lived in Africa until she moved to London, England, in 1949.

Lessing arrived in London with a manuscript of a first novel, *The Grass is Singing*, which takes place in Zimbabwe and which made Lessing's name as a writer. She followed this first publication with three novels from what is, in total, a five-volume set entitled *The Children of Violence* series. Her next two novels were not parts of the series, and the sixth, *The Golden Notebook*, is the novel for which Lessing is most admired. It is revered as a classic of feminist writing and as a brilliant portrayal of social and political post—World War II English life. The novel also includes material that takes place in Africa, so that this novel, like so many of Lessing's works, contributes to the body of work by writers whose journalism and fiction explore and contest the inequalities that followed from European imperialism in Africa.

The fifth novel in Lessing's *The Children of Violence* series points towards the type of fiction she since has been most interested in, novels she calls "space fiction" but which are categorized in bookstores as science fiction. The distinction, Lessing has said, is that science fiction is interested in technology, and she is interested in imagining utopian and other possible future societies.

Of the handful of plays Lessing has written, *Play with a Tiger* is most interesting for the way in which its themes and situations mirror many of those of the *Golden Notebook*. It attests to Lessing's perennial interest in gender and political questions in a modern world that has witnessed the cold war between capitalist and communist regimes and great changes in the relationship between men and women and in the nature of families. The play was first produced in London in 1962, the year it was also published.

Lessing has been nominated for and has won a number of literary prizes throughout her career, such as Spain's prestigious Prince of Asturias Prize for literature in 2001. In 1995, she received a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for an autobiographical book, *Under My Skin*, and an honorary degree from Harvard University. In 1999, Queen Elizabeth II of England appointed Lessing a Companion of Honour.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Anna Freeman and Tom Lattimer are in the midst of a heated exchange. Tom is trying to find out why Anna has decided not to marry him. Anna avoids the subject. She responds to Tom's words by talking about something completely unrelated. For example, she mentions the man she sees standing in the street outside, the man who often stands there, apparently because he is in love with a woman who lives in a nearby apartment. Finally, however, Anna explains herself. She says that she cannot stand the idea of Tom having taken a job at a popular women's magazine. Tom accuses Anna of being a romantic, insisting that she will one day regret not having a regular job herself.

They hear a noise at the door, the voice of the woman from whom Anna rents rooms. The woman is Mary Jackson; she is calling her cat. She enters the room not knowing Tom is there to ask Anna if she wants to go out for a cup of coffee. She sees Tom and figures out what is going on. She is cavalier about the situation, asking Tom how it was he thought the two of them would ever get married.

They hear the doorbell ring. Mary exits and returns with the visitor. It is Harry Paine, one of Anna's friends. Harry has come for sympathy from Anna. He is married but has affairs. His latest girlfriend has left him; she is going to marry. He wants Anna to go with him for a few drinks so that he can pour his heart out. Anna refuses. He asks Mary to go instead, and Mary is very pleased.

As Mary does, Harry tells Tom that Anna would never have married him. He tells Tom that Tom is turning into a conventional person. Tom responds by telling Harry that Harry has a similar job, that they are not so very different. This makes Harry stop making fun of Tom. The four then begin to speak of Dave Miller, a friend of Anna, whom Harry says Anna should marry instead of Tom. Anna says she never will and predicts that Dave, despite his apparent unconventionality, will end up like Harry□married and routinely cheating on his wife. Harry is angry at Anna's portrait of him.

While they are talking, the doorbell rings again. Mary exits to see who it is. With Mary gone, Tom uses Mary to scare Anna. He says that Anna is on her way to becoming Mary, an older lady obsessed with cats, because cats will be her only company if she continues to refuse marriage proposals. Anna insults Tom, in turn, to defend Mary. Her last word is that she would rather be lonely and true to herself than a compromiser like Tom.

Harry and Mary leave, and the person who rang the doorbell reaches Anna's room. It is Janet Stevens, one of Dave Miller's casual girlfriends. Tom leaves.

With Tom gone, Janet explains why she has come. She is pregnant by Dave, having decided to trap him into marriage by not using birth control. She has not seen him for

days and is fearful that he may have left her for good. She knows that Dave is in love with Anna. She wants Anna to tell Dave about her situation. She leaves upset but glad about what she has done. She says it will be good for Dave to settle down.

Next, Dave arrives. Anna is by now deeply frustrated and upset. She has broken an engagement with a man she has been in love with. She is in love with Dave, and she knows that her relationship with Dave is bound to end as well. At first, Anna behaves coldly towards Dave, and he does not know why. Finally, she melts. They sit cross-legged on the carpet facing each other, as if to begin a ritual, and it is clear they have done this before. The lights dim and the walls of Anna's room fade away. The two seem to be floating in the midst of the great city of London.

Act 2

Anna and Dave are as they were at the end of act 1. Anna stands and becomes as she was when she was a child, mimicking her childhood Australian accent. She is speaking to her mother as she apparently did sometime in the past, declaring that she will never become like her mother: isolated, on a farm, tied to the home by endless duties.

Next Dave goes back into his past. He acts out a scene from his childhood on the streets of Chicago. He is with friends. They are pretending that they are depression-era gangsters. He recalls how he had strong political convictions even then, going through anarchist and socialist phases.

Dave next talks about how he once went to see a psychoanalyst. He begged the psychoanalyst to explain to him how to be content. The doctor tells him to marry and to have a couple children. Dave is both scoffing and nervous as he tells the story, as if he is worried that the analyst is right in telling him to live and believe like most everybody else. Dave also explains how his parents were hardly present as he was growing up. They were both union organizers and often traveled.

They hear a commotion in the street. The women across the way are fighting, as Anna says they did the previous night. Anna and Dave speak anxiously about wanting a better world and wanting to be better people themselves. Anna says she once tried very hard to conjure a vision of herself as an entirely different person. What she saw was a tiger. She called the tiger to her, and it was purring. Then it slashed her and began to snarl. Next she heard its keepers calling and wheeling out its huge cage.

The phone rings, but Anna does not answer it. She tells Dave that his future might simply be marriage to a typical American girl. Anna announces that she is very tired of trying to be good.

Act 3

Anna turns on the light. The walls of the room return. She declares to Dave that her and Dave's relationship is over. Dave is frustrated. He tries to force Anna to interact with

him. She repeats that their relationship is over. She says that they are not so very special, that they are merely egotists. She says that egotists are people for whom self-respect is more important that anything else, even other people. She belittles herself and Dave. They speak briefly of Anna's child. Dave asks what the child means to Anna. She says the child gives her hope in a better future.

Harry and Mary return; their drunken, boisterous voices are heard. There is the sense that Harry will spend the night with Mary. Mary enters but leaves shortly thereafter. Harry enters and says that Mary has fallen asleep. Anna tells Harry to go home to his wife, Helen, which angers Harry. The telephone rings. Harry is sure it is Tom. Anna repeats that Harry must go home to Helen. He does so.

Anna finally tells Dave about Janet's visit and her situation. Dave is not particularly shocked. He says that he will marry Janet if that is what she wants but that he will not really change. He accuses Anna of using Janet as an excuse to end their relationship.

The telephone rings. It is Janet. Dave consoles her. He hangs up. Dave and Anna look at each other. He leaves.

Anna begins to cry. She pours herself a drink. Mary comes in and takes the drink away from Anna. Anna says Dave has gone to get married. Mary says he was bound to. The play ends with the two women speaking about how Anna's boy will be coming home from boarding school soon. The walls of Anna's room once again dissolve. The curtain falls.

Act 1

Act 1 Summary

Play With a Tiger is Doris Lessing's play about the dynamics of human relationships and the expectations and challenges faced by women who choose less conventional roles than those inherent in marriage. The story takes place in 1958 at the London home of Mary Jackson, who rents a few rooms to Anna Freeman, a tenant of many years. Anna has a son who is away at school, but she retains his room for him in the house.

The play begins at nine o'clock in the evening, and Anna is in her room with a man named Tom Lattimer to whom Anna was engaged until very recently. Tom implores Anna to explain why she no longer wants to marry him. Anna is a freelance writer and works on different projects to make her living, and Tom thinks that a secure future with someone such as himself is just what Anna needs.

Conversely, Anna is repelled because Tom has accepted a position as a business manager for a women's magazine. Tom must have dinner with his new boss and his boss's wife later tonight, and Anna declines the invitation because she deplores all the trappings that go along with regular employment.

Anna changes the subject repeatedly and draws Tom's attention to a man standing on the corner on the street below. The man stands there every night in anticipation of seeing one of the women who lives across the street. The subject of Tom's new job arises, and Tom puts aside the issue of Anna marrying him and tells Anna that she will one day see the value of being regularly employed and regret her decision to eschew it.

Mary Jackson arrives outside Mary's door and comes in to ask Anna if she would like to go for some coffee, but Tom's presence stops her. Mary senses that Anna and Tom are in the middle of a disagreement. Mary has become Anna's friend over the years in addition to her landlord and freely tells Tom that Anna will never marry him.

The doorbell rings, and Mary leaves the room. Soon the visitor enters Anna's room. The newcomer is a man named Harry Paine, a friend of Anna's, who has come for some sympathy over the end of a love affair. Harry is married to a woman named Helen, but their marriage has descended into one of convenience only. Harry has spent his life in a series of affairs, and his latest girlfriend has left him to get married.

Anna declines Harry's invitation to go out for a few drinks, but Mary happily accepts the invitation instead. While Harry waits for Mary to get ready to go out, Harry tells Tom that Anna would have never married Tom because he is too conventional for her. Tom takes Harry off guard by telling him that he is not much different from Harry, who has a very conventional job and lifestyle with the exception of the extramarital affairs.

Another one of Anna's suitors, Dave Miller, is mentioned, and Harry suggests that if Anna were to marry anyone it should be Dave. Dave is the only one of Anna's men

friends unconventional enough to appeal to Anna on a long-term basis, but Anna predicts that Dave will ultimately end up like all the other men she knows who get married and cheat on their wives.

The doorbell rings again, and Mary once more leaves the room. Tom uses this to his advantage by telling Anna that she will end up like Mary someday, a lonely old woman with a cat, unless she accepts his marriage proposal. Anna is upset for herself and for Mary and tells Tom that she prefers an authentic relationship with herself to one where she compromises in order to be married.

The person who rang the doorbell is shown into Anna's room, and Harry and Mary leave for the evening. The newcomer introduces herself as Janet Stevens from Philadelphia. She is looking for Dave Miller. Tom uses this as his reason to leave, and the two women are left alone in Anna's room.

The girl announces that she is looking for Dave, that she is five months pregnant and that he has promised to marry her. Dave has commitment issues, and Janet has tricked him by becoming pregnant in order to force the marriage. Although cunning, Janet knows that Dave is truly in love with Anna. She would like Anna to explain everything to Dave. Anna claims to not know where Dave is and refuses to take part in Janet's scheme. The girl finally leaves.

Before long, Dave arrives at Anna's building wanting to reconcile with her. Anna is clearly distraught because she has broken her engagement to Tom and realizes that any long-term commitment from Dave is not possible either. Anna's withdrawal makes her appear cool to Tom, and Anna's demeanor only infuriates Dave, who wants to reconnect with her. Dave finally wears down Anna's resistance, and the two sit close on the floor to discuss the situation. Dave urges Anna to not shut anything out, and she agrees to try.

Act 1 Analysis

Lessing has appropriately given Anna the last name of Freeman, as that is Anna's ultimate goal. Anna freelances for a living and does not like being associated with organizations or institutions that constrict her ability to create and be herself. These same characteristics wreak havoc with Anna's personal life, as she refuses to enter into any marriage that will change who she is.

The theme of independence is very important in the play, and it is the guiding force for Anna's life. She seems to be comfortable with all that the single state provides, both personally and professionally. The men who wish to integrate her into their lives introduce the conflict. Anna feels betrayed by Tom, who used to work independently but who has taken a regular job. Anna believes that Tom has sold himself out and will take her along with him in the process.

Act 2

Act 2 Summary

The second act opens with no passage of time, and Anna and Dave are still seated on the floor. The pair naturally falls into playing a game in which they explore their true feelings by talking as if they are children again. Anna speaks in her native Australian accent, as if she were speaking to her mother, and she declares that she will never have a life like her mother's, trapped as a housewife with unending work and no joy.

Dave's childhood regression takes the form of a scenario on the streets of Chicago. He and his friends pretend to be famous gangsters from the 1930s. Dave was the leader of the neighborhood gangs, and his socialist and anarchist tendencies swayed the vision for the entire group. This group association prepared Dave and his friends to negotiate their world. Dave laments the fact that kids today do not know how to do that. Dave continues his story by telling Anna that he once went to a therapist to determine how to be happy, and the therapist told Dave to get married and have some children. Dave rejected this idea, but he is beginning to wonder if it is true.

Anna and Dave are united in the fact that each wants to be a better person and hopes to strive for that by eliminating all the emotional walls around them. Dave encourages Anna to share her icon of a new and better person. Most of the time it is Anna herself. One day, though, Anna tried the same exercise, and a tiger appeared instead of her own image.

In the vision, Anna draws the tiger toward her and pets it while it purrs so loud that it drowns out the traffic noise outside. Suddenly, the tiger lashes out, and Anna realizes that she is bleeding. The tiger jumps up on Anna's bed, and she stares into his eyes for awhile before he leaps off the bed and out into the street. She hears his trainers approach with a big cage.

Anna is weary now and tells Dave that she is tired by the game and that the future may very well be in the shape of some nice American girl with a baby in her arms. It is ironic that she and Dave look for tigers and monsters and resplendent human beings, but sometimes the future looks just like a girl from Philadelphia.

Act 2 Analysis

The reader can easily understand why Anna is drawn to Dave over all the other men who surround her. Through the exercise, he and Anna play as children. Dave reveals his socialist and anarchist beliefs, which were strong even as a young man. This strength of character and conviction is very appealing to Anna, who revels in individual thought. These lingering beliefs have not brought Dave complete happiness, however, and he begins to wonder whether the therapist was right in his advice for Dave to marry and have children to achieve a happier life.

Symbolically, the play takes its name from Anna's dream scenario of encountering a tiger when trying to imagine herself as new and improved. Anna feels the power inherent in a tiger within her own core and relates to the animal, but she is not prepared to relate to it completely and fails to a degree when the tiger lashes out at her, leaving her bleeding and scarred. Anna wants to be fearless and powerful, but she hesitates because of the probable injury to her emotions and her psyche.

Act 3

Act 3 Summary

Anna and Dave are still in Anna's room, and Anna is sad because she thought for a moment that she and Dave had a future. The relationship is over, though, a fact which she states repeatedly in spite of Dave's insistence to the contrary. Dave feels that Anna can commit to no other person other than her son, and Anna is hurt by the comment. At least her child provides a sense of future, while Dave cannot.

Mary and Harry are heard returning, and their voices sound drunken. Mary is happily anticipating that Harry will spend the night. Harry enters Anna's room, and Anna encourages him to go home to Helen. Harry is tired of going home to a home where there is no love.

The telephone interrupts their conversation, and Harry, convinced that it is Tom calling, yells into the receiver that Anna will never marry Tom and hangs up the phone. Eventually, Harry leaves to go home because of Anna's urgings. The time is nearly four o'clock in the morning now, and Anna is tired. She tells Dave of Janet's visit to Anna earlier this evening. Dave admits that he will marry Janet and accuses Anna of using this complication to end the relationship that Anna and Dave share.

The phone rings once more, revealing Janet on the other end. Dave speaks softly to her and hangs up. Dave and Anna look at each other for a very long moment, as if to give Anna a chance to change her mind. She does not, so Dave leaves the house.

Anna loses control for a few minutes. She cries and attempts to drink a glass of Scotch. Mary enters the room, and Anna informs her that Dave has left for good this time. Mary tells Anna that Dave was bound to get married at some point. Mary is still feeling the effects of too much drink tonight, but she helps Anna begin to focus on tomorrow. Both of the women have grown sons who will be visiting soon and life will go on.

Act 3 Analysis

The circumstances surrounding the death of Anna's husband are never revealed, but perhaps it is the tragedy of the loss that keeps Anna fixed in her resolute position against marriage. Anna does love Dave, who falls short somehow of her expectations, and the relationship is mercifully ended with Dave's agreement to marry Janet.

Ironically, Anna, who wants the ultimate freedom in all areas of her life, keeps herself hidden away in a room in another woman's house. The author, however, provides an element of hope for Anna at the play's end, when the lights of London fill the stage, symbolizing the possibilities and opportunities still available to Anna.

The play is very forward thinking for the time period in which it was written and produced. The period of the 1950s was one of compact family units settling down as the iconic image of happiness. Lessing's topic of a woman asserting her rights to individuality and self-fulfillment was several years ahead of the woman's movement proclaiming a woman's right to define her own destiny. It should be considered an innovative piece of work in this vein of thought.

Characters

Anna Freeman

Anna Freeman is the main character of *Play with a Tiger*. Over the course of the play's action, she explains to her fiancé that she will not marry him, watches another man she is close to realize that he has been trapped into marriage, and interacts with a friend and with the woman from whom she is renting two rooms. Anna Freeman is an Australian woman who has lived in London long enough that she has lost her accent and speaks like any other middle-class Londoner. Her husband was killed in an unidentified war, perhaps World War II, and she has a child from the marriage. She supports herself by writing reviews of books, and the like, on a freelance basis. Lessing's choice of surname for Anna is significant, as much is made of Anna being "free" in the play. Yet, freedom is not a blissful state for Anna. To be free in the play means to be wholly independent of persons and institutions that conflict with one's ideals. Anna's ideals are that women should be considered the equals of men, that society should be less consumerist, and that governments should be more interested in equalizing society by improving the lot of the working classes. It is important to her not to take a regular job, as this would mean contributing to the strength of society as it stands. Thus, Anna is free at great emotional and financial cost, making very little money and remaining alienated from the mainstream of society. Anna's ideals also explain her decision not to marry. Her feeling is that the institution of marriage, as it stands in British society, does not work as well for women as it does for men. She believes that if she marries she will be compelled to fulfill a particular wifely role that will stifle her individuality. Her feelings that marriage will weaken her ability to live according to her principles are strengthened by the fact that her fiancé, who used to support himself as she does, has taken on a regular job. He is sick of his financially precarious existence, and Anna sees this as evidence that he is becoming a part of society's mainstream.

Mary Jackson

Mary Jackson owns the house in which Anna lives and rents rooms for herself and her child. She appears intermittently throughout the play. Like Anna, Mary is a widow with a child. She is about ten years older than Anna. In a way, she represents Anna ten years in the future. As such, she represents the difficulties of freedom, as Anna imagines freedom. Mary is lonely, craving male companionship but finding that men of her own age gravitate toward women much younger than themselves. She is intelligent and emotionally strong, but there is the sense that her circumstances are wearing her down. There is much discussion of her and her cat, as if she is on her way to becoming a doddering old lady who does little else but talk to animals. Tom uses Mary to scare Anna, to make her think that she will be ridiculous, and lonely, in ten years' time, when she is still unmarried and her child has gone off to college. At the end of the play, Anna and Mary stand together, as if to communicate that as long as women who refuse to

compromise have each other, they will be able to withstand the difficulties of their circumstances.

Tom Lattimer

Tom is the character with whom Anna is interacting at the beginning of *Play with a Tiger*. He appears only in act 1. He and Anna are discussing what was to have been their impending marriage and Anna's decision to break the engagement. Like Anna, Tom is highly principled. Also like Anna, his means of financial support are precarious. In fact, apparently motivating Anna's decision to break off their engagement is his recent decision to take on a regular job as business manager at a woman's magazine. There is the sense that he has taken this job partly in anticipation of his marriage so that the new household will be financially stable. Anna sees this as evidence of a change in Tom's character that does not bode well for her own future. She thinks that his decision to take the job is evidence that he is compromising his ideals, and she fears that in marrying him she will be drawn into a circle of compromise. Although Tom manipulates Anna into thinking twice about breaking off their engagement by exploiting her fears of being alone, he remains a mostly sympathetic character. He is intelligent, treats Anna as a friend and an equal, wants her to change her mind, but does not humiliate himself in his attempts to convince her to do so. Further, he knows that she might still be seeing another man and is bitter, but not abusive. He insists that he is the better choice for her and that financial stability is something she should think about.

The Man

Throughout *Play with a Tiger*, Anna refers to a man who stands vigil in the street below, looking up longingly at the window of some women who live in an apartment across from Anna. According to Anna, the man is in love with one of the apartment's inhabitants.

Dave Miller

Dave Miller is a U.S. citizen in his early thirties temporarily in London. He is the child of two labor activists and is active in international socialist politics himself. He is a vivid character, energetic yet tortured by self-doubt. He arrives at Anna's house after Tom, Harry, and Mary have left and after Janet Stevens has visited Anna. He interacts with Anna after his arrival until nearly the end of the play. He and Anna are in love, even though their affair has been taking place with Anna still considering Tom as her primary partner. Dave encourages Anna to remain true to her ideals and not to marry Tom. His attitude about Tom might be motivated by possessive feelings, although he is supposedly above such sentiments. His attitude about Anna's potential marriage is also ironic, as he finds out over the course of the evening that he himself will be marrying shortly; one of his casual girlfriends, Janet Stevens, is five months pregnant. He cannot shame the woman and let her have an illegitimate child, and so he will do what he has

said he never would, and what Anna should not, and that is marry a conventional person. To Dave, this marriage means that he will be Janet's husband in name, but not in spirit. Implicitly, he is claiming that his role will be, primarily, to provide financially for her and the child. He insists that Janet's pregnancy should have no effect on his and Anna's relationship. But for Anna, the event of Dave's marriage is the definitive end of their association. He will, after all, end up returning to the United States, and she knows that she is unlikely ever to see him again. Thus, Dave is a character prone to self-deception; he is far less able than Anna to remain true to his ideals, but he seems to believe that he is doing so.

Harry Paine

Harry Paine is a man in his fifties who has a job similar to Tom's new one. He is married and has serial affairs. His wife, Helen, who is often referred to but never appears in the play, is ill and accepts his affairs, although they demoralize her. She accepts them in order to maintain the marriage. Much as Mary, as a character, functions to refer to Anna in the future, so Harry functions as a possible future version of Tom. In other words, Harry and Helen's marriage is what Anna fears hers and Tom's will become. Will Tom settle into his job and eventually come to take Anna for granted? Will he begin having affairs with younger women like Harry does? Will she accept these affairs as Harry's wife does out of fear of change? Mary and Anna pamper Harry. It is clear that they are in the habit of listening to his woes and making him feel better when one of his young women leaves him. Indeed, he visits Anna and Mary for sympathy because his latest affair has dissolved. Considering that Anna and Mary identify with Helen and all other women in her position, their attachment to Harry causes them emotional conflict. Anna's acceptance of Harry also demonstrates that her ability to avoid compromise is imperfect. She dislikes how married men in her society pursue affairs as a matter of course, yet Harry remains her close friend.

Helen Paine

Helen never appears in Lessing's play, but she is referred to often. She is Harry Paine's long-suffering wife, putting up with his infidelities because she cannot bear the thought of ending the marriage. She is ill, which makes Harry's infidelities seem crueler, yet he has no intention of changing his ways.

Janet Stevens

Janet Stevens is a young U.S. citizen in her twenties, who is a lover of Dave Miller. She knows Dave well enough to know that he is unlikely to marry her, and Dave has told her that he is in love with Anna. She becomes pregnant in order to force him to marry her. She arrives at Anna's home after Tom, Harry, and Mary have left and before Dave arrives. She has been unable to get in contact with Dave, and she knows that Dave,

sooner or later, will see Anna again. She wants Anna to tell Dave that she is pregnant. She is somewhat ashamed of her dishonesty, but she is also defiant.

Themes

Activism

Lessing's introductory comments on her play, addressed to potential directors, state that *Play with a Tiger* is "about the rootless, de-classed people who live in bed-sitting rooms or small flats or the cheaper hotel rooms." "Such people," she says, "are usually presented on the stage in a detailed squalor of realism which to my mind detracts from what is interesting about them." Of interest to Lessing in particular appears to be the way in which many of these persons choose their peripheral status in their pursuit of alternative social and political convictions. To be sure, Lessing's major characters in *Play with a Tiger* are, or until recently have been, committed political activists, wholly dedicated to their project of changing the world for the better. Their quick, complex speech is delivered with passion; their every act, every moment, is of the essence.

Anna, Dave, and Tom's desire to mold the world into the better one they envision involves their remaining peripheral to the mainstream, as to them all institutions and social practices as they stand perpetuate the tainted system they decry. Anna is just able to scrape together a living by freelance writing. Tom is perhaps finally giving up on his fight, as he has just accepted the offer of a regular job. Similarly, Dave calmly accepts the news that a casual girlfriend is pregnant, and he must marry her. His equanimity suggests that his having been trapped into marriage is not so unwelcome after all, that he is somehow relieved at having been put in the position of having to give up on being different. However, despite the changes of heart the play's principal men seem to be undergoing, it is understood that they are activists, committed to a vision of a changed and better world.

Freedom

To be free in Lessing's play means to be impervious to the traps of conventional society, to see that the truth lies in other ways of living. The value of this sort of freedom is seen in Lessing's contrast of Harry and Helen's conventional and problematic coupling and Anna and Dave's wholly passionate liaison. Harry betrays the spirit of his marriage as a matter of course; Helen remains married to him, but unhappily. Clearly, they are not really a couple, despite their married state. The intimacy, passion, and comradeship of Anna and Dave stand out by contrast (even as Dave appears to be preparing to give up on his convictions). The two are intellectual partners, eagerly challenging each other and mostly happily agreeing on their aims. They are a "new" couple, man and woman, equal and not focused on their own private comforts but on the good of all.

Yet, this sort of freedom takes its toll on its adherents. Anna and Dave suffer in their position on the fringes. They are lonely, as idealists of their ilk are few and far between. The smallness of their numbers means that they have to work for change particularly

diligently. Thus they are drawn to what they imagine are the solaces of accepting things as they are, for example a less stressful life.

Compromise

The specter haunting every fervent, radical political idealist is compromise. These persons believe a changed world will be a better one so that participating in societal institutions as they stand is torture tantamount to supporting them. Yet the changes they desire are for the future to deliver, and so the possibility of not having to compromise is nearly impossible. As Lessing's play shows, idealists can simply become weary with the effort of what Anna calls being "good." Tom has compromised his ideals by having accepted a job as business manager in a typical (as opposed to progressive) women's magazine, and Dave is on his way to becoming a husband and father in middle America. Tom is not particularly happy with himself, but he has arrived at the point where he can accuse Anna of being a hopeless romantic. In other words, he is suggesting that these radical views were appropriate in his youth but that greater wisdom, or greater age, entails "compromise."

Love

At the center of Lessing's play are Dave and Anna. They kneel together on the floor, facing each other, engaging in explorations of their past and motivations. They feed off each other's company and long for each other, as the play's man in the street longs for the woman he does not yet know. Anna and Dave's intense relationship points to a vision of love and togetherness extolled by many persons of Lessing's generation. This is not a vision of coupling whose first passion eventually wanes, transmuting into a comfortable, filial intimacy. It is love always fiery, the means by which people continuously grow as persons through a profound communion of minds. Sexuality is a core component of Lessing's vision of perfect love; it is the engine that fuels lovers' growth and deep togetherness.

Like Lessing, many other, younger, mid-twentieth-century Westerners were convinced that their parents' and grandparents' generations had been sexually repressed, caught in the belief that sex was shameful, missing out on one of life's greatest pleasures. Middle-class younger persons were also unhappy about the different sexual standards for men and women, with men given license to experiment sexually, at least before marriage, and with women expected to remain virgins. Further, in middle-class circles various nineteenth-century attitudes about women's sexuality lingered, notions that many women were ready to contest. These were that women enjoyed sex less than men and that enjoying sex was in fact contrary to a true woman's nature. These changes in people's attitudes about sex, in conjunction with the notion that sexual activity was conducive to creativity and personal growth, led to the strong interest in sex that characterized the counterculture and other progressive social and political movements within the mid-twentieth-century West.

Style

Symbol

There are a great many symbols in *Play with a Tiger*. Symbols are places, persons, or things in an artwork that suggest a number of ideas, as opposed to just one. For example, the tiger that Anna says she once imagined may a symbol of creative energy, the danger that trying to change society entails, and of the ideal society Anna wishes for. The man who spends his evenings looking up at the window of a woman he is in love with may symbolize yearning and passion in general and the deep passion of Anna and Dave's love in particular. Anna's room window is also a symbol. It is a symbol of her connection to others and to the outside world. Hence, when she is emotionally overwhelmed in the play, she closes the window, as if to retreat into the safer realm of a wholly private world.

Setting and Props

The setting of *Play with a Tiger* is, throughout, Anna's room in Mary's house. According to Lessing's stage directions, it is a very large room, sparsely furnished. Lessing's stage directions also indicate that the items that furnish the room, the stage "props," are to be austere: "there are no soft chairs or settees where the actors might lounge or sprawl. This stark set forces a certain formality of movement, stance, and confrontation." Further, at the end of act 1, and for the entire act 2, the walls of Anna's room are dissolved, so that the stage becomes even barer, and the room seems to be a part of the street. The starkness, strangeness, and formality Lessing strives for corresponds to her sense that "naturalism, or, if you like, realism, is the greatest enemy of the theatre." By naturalism, Lessing means a play whose settings and action attempt to mimic those of real life.

The physical discomfort of the actors that the play's props and setting guarantee points to the difficulty and discomfort of their lives. It is difficult to have high ideals and attempt to live up to them; it is difficult to believe differently than other people and so not fit into the mainstream; it is difficult to change oneself and the world. The language of *Play with a Tiger* conveys these central ideas of the play as well. The characters are always highly passionate in their speech. They often hurt each other with their words, and they often argue. What this conveys, again, is the suffering, difficulties, and stresses of people who refuse to accept themselves and things as they are.

Parallel Characters

Roughly speaking, there are three generations of characters in Lessing's play. The children of Mary and Anna are the youngest generation. Anna, Tom, and Dave are another. Mary, Harry, and Helen represent a third, oldest generation. The children represent the future, which is as yet unknown and which may be, perhaps, a world

closer to that which Anna desires. The rest of Lessing's characters are doubles of each other. Tom and Dave might become Harry, who represents a typical, married British man of the time. He is complacent about his wife, certain that she will not cheat on him, and certain that he may cheat on her as much as he likes: Harry works; Helen, as a typical homemaker does not; Helen for financial reasons must put up with her husband and conform to his rules. Anna, for her part, might become Mary. Mary is lonely but still has her self-respect.

Fantasy and Transformation

In act 2, Dave and Anna relive moments in their past. They seem to *become* the children they once were. Anna also recounts a fantasy that seemed very real to her, like something she was actually experiencing. This is the story of the tiger on the loose that she tells to Dave. These moments of fantasy and transformation point to how the world will change for the better only if people try to imagine something new and different. Dave and Anna are willing to imagine; they are persons trying to usher in new and better ways of living.

Historical Context

Post-War Britain

Britain was a thoroughly chastened nation by the end of World War II. Its vast world empire, which it had built up over the course of the nineteenth century, was unraveling. Many of its former colonies had achieved, or were in the process of fighting for, their independence. Furthermore, London, amongst other cities, had been devastated by German bombing campaigns during the war.

In addition to rebuilding and regaining economic stability, postwar Britain was experiencing significant changes in its sociocultural makeup. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, roughly speaking, Britons tended to fall into either one of two major social groupings: the working class/small shopkeepers or the upper-middle/aristocratic classes. A modern, white-collar, middle-class population had begun developing in the 1930s, but its ranks were as yet quite small.

The cultures of Britain's two major class groupings were widely distinct. The urban working classes had come into being over the course of the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the nineteenth century. They were rural peasants who migrated into cities to become factory workers and the like. The upper-middle classes and aristocracy were made up of land owning families, industrialists, the small numbers of university-educated Britons, those who had benefited from Britain's imperial ventures abroad, and so forth.

As the middle-class grew and more working-class children took advantage of a greater access to education and university training, Britain's traditional balance of classes and cultures was unsettled. The educated and upwardly mobile children of working-class parents had to define themselves as a new class, threatening the established upper classes in the process. Some of these newly educated, working-class persons became university professors. As academics, they began writing about the history, culture, and values of the English working class. They extolled working-class culture as an integral component of British life, upsetting members of the upper classes who had always identified the nation with their own culture and values.

Also posing a challenge to British life and tradition, especially in the great cities, were the immigrants who began arriving from Britain's colonies or former colonies. Indians, Pakistanis, and persons from Caribbean and African countries, for example, brought their distinct cultures to England and a different history of British imperialism. Whereas many Britons had liked to believe that the colonization of foreign territories had been mostly a boon to the colonized, the new immigrants made it clear that the story was otherwise. Colonization from the point of view of the colonized was a story of terrible oppression, a suppression of local belief and tradition, which resulted in nations of persons struggling to establish stable identities. They were no longer what they had been before they were colonized, but they were not British either. Certainly, they were

welcomed to British soil by very few. Thus, Britons had to begin negotiating a new multiethnic, multicultural society.

Post-War British Theater

Some histories of post—World War II British theater stress the way in which one play in particular reinvigorated the drama scene. This play is John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, which was first produced in 1956. Osborne's play is highly serious. Its main character, Jimmy, is a young married man with a menial job. He is the son of working-class parents, and he is married to a woman of a higher social station. Jimmy is bitter, angry, and very clever. In his speeches, he attacks the stagnant conventionality of his fellow Britons, Britain's class system, the pretensions of the upper classes, himself, his wife, and more.

This play inaugurated a new trend of high purpose and social inquiry in drama. Before this play, after the war, drama was dominated by "drawing-room" comedies, or light comedies of manners, "whodunits" (murder mysteries), and similar light fare. Osborne is often grouped with other British authors of the era, such as Kingsley Amis and Alan Sillitoe. This group of young writers came to be known as the Angry Young Man. More than one critic called Lessing herself an angry young woman, as her novels addressed the same sorts of thorny social, political, and cultural issues that concerned this group of young men.

The Communist Party of Great Britain

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), of which Lessing was a member until 1956, was formed in 1920. It gained members over the next decades and was most influential politically in the 1940s.

In the 1950s, around the time Lessing left the party, the CPGB lost many of its members. Lessing and others were horrified at the Soviet suppression of a popular uprising in Hungary, one of the Union's member states. They felt strongly that if one of the Soviet republics was unhappy with Moscow's rule, then it should be allowed to determine its own future. Lessing and others at this time finally accepted the fact that Soviet leaders had given up entirely on working toward their democratic ideals and were perpetuating communism through dictatorial political methods.

In the 1960s, the party split into two factions: those who wished to distance themselves entirely from Soviet communism and those who wished to retain ties to Moscow. The former group, committed to what is known as "eurocommunism," garnered more adherents and took over the party.

In 1999, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the CPGB decided to become a think-tank group known as the Democratic Left. Some members, however, were not satisfied with this decision and formed new communist parties under different names.

The Cold War

After World War II (1939—1945), with Europe's greatest powers devastated, two superpowers emerged in the world: the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or the Soviet Union). The USSR, which dissolved in 1991, was a group of mainly Eastern European and Asian nations. These two great unions were soon involved in a contest, with the United States dedicated to the spread of capitalism, an economic system based on private investment and ownership, and the Soviet Union dedicated to the spread of communism, a system based on collective ownership and the equal distribution of wealth. This conflict of ideology, or belief, is known as the cold war. It was a "cold" war because the United States and the Soviet Union never took up arms against each other; it was a serious battle nonetheless because both nations intervened extensively in other countries' affairs in an effort to guarantee that its system would be adopted.

Communists in the United States were vigorously suppressed during the period when the cold war was at its height, in the 1950s. This was a bleak period in U.S. political life, since the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and belief. Communists in various other democracies were not suppressed, and so communist parties had memberships in various countries around the globe, including the United Kingdom and Europe, especially the latter.

Critical Overview

In *Doris Lessing*, Mona Knapp writes that Lessing's "main interest in the theater spans the years from 1958 to 1962, and was no doubt inspired by her work as a substitute theater critic for *The Observer* for a few weeks in 1958." As Knapp says, the plays Lessing wrote during this period "were written concurrently with *The Golden Notebook* and are thematically related to it."

The play opened in London, in March 1962, to mixed reviews. Critics were appreciative of certain elements of the play and of the acting and staging but found fault with the play's structure. In her review in *Theatre World*, for example, Frances Stephens writes that "the best passages are concerned with [Anna and Dave's] fierce self-analysis as each in turn looks back to childhood, his in America and hers in Australia. It is part of a desire to unravel the enigma of life and to stumble towards a philosophy that will both explain and justify their love." Yet, as she says, only these "two of Doris Lessing's characters are, strictly speaking, involved in the heart of the play . . . and the problems, hopes and fears of the remaining four scarcely move us at all." Critic J. W. Lambert, writing in *Drama*, calls Anna's character an "egomaniac bore." To its credit, he says, the play "has pinned down something about the emotional and psychological rootlessness of much modern life."

When the play was staged in the United States, in New York, in 1965, it received similarly mixed reviews. A reviewer in *Variety* says bluntly that "Since the characters are loquacious, endlessly psychoanalyzing each other, and since the situation is not very original, the play is tiresome." Edith Oliver, writing for the *New Yorker*, is less scathing. She writes that the play is "awkward and disappointing" but that it has "a few good moments." She admires the play's "vitality" and states that it has a "literary sureness of touch that is rare Off Broadway."

As Lessing's biographer, Carole Klein, points out, just as Anna's character grows out of Lessing herself, so Dave Miller is based on a love of Lessing's life, the American political activist and author Clancy Sigal. In other words, *Play with a Tiger* is not autobiographical, but it is, nonetheless, informed by Lessing's own experiences.

Lessing was not happy with the 1962 London production of her play. Unlike its critics, she was displeased with the actors' and director's interpretation of her characters. She felt that the portrayal of Dave Miller was particularly off the mark and was irritated by the long, laborious process of booking actors and getting the play onto the stage. In a 1980 interview conducted by Tan Gim Ean and others, which was collected in *Doris Lessing: Conversations*, Lessing discusses the 1962 production. She remarks how seeing it performed soured playwrighting for her. As she says, a play, unlike a novel, is not entirely within its author's control, as it must be given to directors and actors to do with what they think best: "That's the agony of being a playwright. Why should one go through this humiliation and torture when you can write a novel and get it printed the way you wrote it?"

Play with a Tiger is rarely discussed in full-length scholarly works on Lessing. Knapp's book is one notable exception to this general rule. Since Lessing is well known as a novelist as opposed to a playwright and since *The Golden Notebook*, amongst other of Lessing's novels, contains treatments of the same concerns and issues, critics tend to pass over the play, focusing their attention instead on *The Golden Notebook* or these other novels.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Dell'Amico is an instructor of English literature and composition. In this essay, Dell'Amico explores how Lessing's reformist political convictions inform her play.

Doris Lessing declined to renew her membership in the Communist Party of Great Britain for the year 1957. Like so many other persons with communist political convictions in the West at this time, she felt that she had to cut off ties with the Soviet Union whose communist order had devolved into a pernicious dictatorship. Yet the reformist political convictions that led her to join the party in the first place never left her. *Play with a Tiger* is evidence of her continued concern with equality, for instance, as it is an examination of how marriage and gender norms contribute to women's lesser status in the Western world. Anna Freeman, the play's protagonist, would rather remain single, even if this means being lonely, as she believes marrying will compromise her independence. Further, the play questions the feasibility and desirability of monogamous relationships. For some communist thinkers, monogamy is seen as a form of ownership□the assumption that another person is one's possession. These thinkers link monogamy to the larger capitalist economic system in which certain persons claim ownership of things as opposed to being interested in the collective good of all. Lessing's exploration of monogamy and "free love" in *Play with a Tiger* is seen in Anna's simultaneous relationships with Tom and Dave and the problems these relationships cause her.

Play with a Tiger opens with Anna breaking off an engagement with her fiancé, Tom Lattimer. Yet, in very little time, the audience learns that she has been involved in an affair with another man as well, Dave Miller. Anna's sense of freedom in matters of love and sex would not have surprised Lessing's 1962 audience. Audience members would have been familiar either with Lessing's previous works, which also contain explorations of non-monogamous relationships between men and women, or they would have been apprised of such explorations by being attuned to the cultural climate of the time, in which monogamy was a subject of debate. At issue then, in the triangle of Anna, Tom, and Dave, is not cheating or infidelity, which occurs when a couple has an agreement to be monogamous and one member of the couple does not live up to the agreement. Infidelity as an issue is explored in the play through Harry and Helen Paine's relationship. In the case of Tom, Anna, and Dave, the agreement, implicitly, is that each should be free to pursue whatever sexual relations he or she chooses.

From the 1950s through the 1970s in Western culture, monogamy was vigorously questioned in a variety of quarters. Communist thinkers questioned the practice on the basis that it was an extension of the desire to own things, which for them was a problem in capitalist societies. The belief in private (as opposed to collective) ownership deprived too many, they believed, as persons with education or inherited wealth quickly claimed or bought up all that had been previously public and had the power to make laws protecting their possessions, when capitalism as a system began developing. They argued that the rise of middle-class values, which include a belief in monogamy,

corresponds to the rise of capitalist ways of being. They pointed out, for example, that in some cultures or eras, monogamy in marriage is not automatic.

Others in the mid-twentieth century questioned monogamy as well. These other doubters included those who believed that people cannot thoroughly explore their sexuality without experimenting with partners and that such explorations are imperative to happiness, self-discovery, and true creativity. These notions of the liberating power of sex were integral to the counterculture movements the 1960s and 1970s.

Lessing's experimenting couples undoubtedly derive from her interest in both communist and counterculture doctrine. The communist underpinnings of her questioning stance is seen in the way that Anna is leaving Tom partly because she believes that he is moving away from his far-leftist political convictions. His taking on a job as business manager of a popular women's magazine is evidence of his doubt in these convictions. The audience understands that this is not a serious or feminist women's magazine, rather a fashion or home publication. He will be working for an establishment that perpetuates women's exclusive association with home and beauty matters. Moreover, as business manager, he will be making sure that the magazine turns a profit. Thus, marriage to Tom would mean accepting the onus to be monogamous. Tom has compromised in the area of work, which may mean he is becoming fully conventional and so will embrace monogamy as well. What then of Anna's attractions to men other than Tom, men like Dave with whom she falls in love, who challenge her intellectually? Yet, the fact remains that Anna agreed to being engaged to Tom. Does this mean that she too has considered embracing the monogamous standard? Certainly, Anna's precarious emotional state and self-laceration suggests her doubts. Nevertheless, she chooses to leave Tom, and so she is, as yet, unwilling to give up her exploratory approach to love and relationships. The allure of intense relationships, such as the one she has with Dave, which challenge her to grow as a person, is obviously still strong.

Besides its exploration of monogamy and free love, Lessing's play considers other topics in love, sex, and marriage. For example, the marriage of Harry and Helen Paine is Lessing's unflattering portrait of a typical British marriage of the time. Harry engages in serial affairs. His wife knows that he does, but she remains married to him, although she is terribly unhappy about his infidelity. Helen, notably, never appears in the play (she is only referred to), and she is said to be ailing. Her absence and illness convey Lessing's take on the situation of many wives of the time. Her absence from the play conveys her lack of power, that is, her inability to determine the rules of the marriage. Her failing health conveys her suffering, that she must accept Harry's ways no matter how much humiliation and unhappiness this acceptance entails. Harry's comfortable sense that he may do as he likes derives from his understanding that his wife is unlikely to leave him, no matter what he does. Clearly, Helen is like many women of the time, brought up to marry as opposed to seek a career. If she were to divorce, her social status would decline considerably for a number of reasons. First, child support and alimony laws were weak at the time. Second, older persons, especially older women, attempting to enter into a university for training in a profession was practically unheard

of. Thus, without already having been trained in a profession, Helen would be compelled to take on a menial job, thereby losing her middle-class status.

In contrast to Helen is Anna, who is able to support herself as a freelance writer. Evidently, Anna has been educated sufficiently to compete in a professional world dominated by educated men. This contrast of female characters points to Lessing's learning from communism, which, like feminism, insists that women must be trained in professions in order not to be dependent on men for their financial security. Such dependence, they say, encourages women to remain in unhappy or even destructive marriages. Communists and feminists argue, further, in a related vein, that preschool day care facilities should be extensively developed so that neither half of a married couple would ever have to leave the workforce. They point out that only those persons who stay abreast of developments within their profession remain competitive and employable, so that househusbands or housewives who attempt to enter the work force after many years' absence rarely meet with much success. Certainly, in some Northern European democracies in the early 2000s, these ideas have been taken to heart. High-quality child care is readily available and easily affordable, and persons with children receive generous tax credits.

The characters of Mary and Janet point to other of Lessing's concerns about the status of women and gender norms in the mid-twentieth-century West. Janet's decision to trap Dave into marriage points to how women felt that if they were not married at a young age, they would be looked down on by others. Though Janet is in love with Dave and does what she does partly because she wants him in particular, as a husband, her desperate and devious act suggests how she is compelled to marry as quickly as she can. Instead of taking her time to find a more willing mate, Janet believes that marriage on any terms, even one initiated by manipulation, is better than not being married at all.

Mary's situation explains, to a certain extent, Janet's desperation and rush. When the philandering Harry invites her out for a drink, she is thrilled. Her excitement over this paltry invitation from the questionable Harry conveys the limited nature of her social life. As Tom points out, she receives little attention from men, a fact that follows from her age. (She is in her mid-forties.) Certainly, Harry's affairs are with much younger women, pointing to how older men do not feel obliged to seek out women of their own age. This element of the play refers to a problem that continues to plague Western culture, which is that society does not see beauty or desirability in older women. Older heterosexual women who are single remain sexual beings interested in the attentions of men, yet society associates female sexuality and desirability only with very young women. The sexual invisibility of middle-aged and older women is especially evident in the mainstream movie culture in the United States. The most sought-after female actors are the very young, and they are paired with aging male stars as love interests as a matter of course. This is not to say that they are not also paired with male actors of their own age but rather that younger woman/older man couplings are routine, whereas older women/younger men couplings are not.

The number of persons who believe that sudden, radical change can occur in societies declined considerably from the time *Play with a Tiger* was written. Most reformist

thinkers in the early 2000s worked towards gradual change. Nevertheless, reformist thinkers of the early and mid-twentieth century achieved a great deal. They achieved free health care for all in Europe and other countries, for example, and women's freedoms in the West as well as numerous other countries are solidly guaranteed. Still, reformists remain vigilant, watching carefully as governments legislate a women's right to choose or the right of gay couples to enjoy the same financial and legal benefits as heterosexual couples.

Source: Carol Dell'Amico, Critical Essay on *Play with a Tiger*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Topics for Further Study

Governments have always employed spies to root out enemy and competitor secrets. Spy work flourished in the West and the Soviet Union, especially during the cold war. One famous spy case concerned a group of four British men who were Soviet spies known as the "Cambridge Four": Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, and Anthony Blunt. Research one or all of these four men, exploring his/their views and reasons for doing what he/they did.

Many political activists today protest at meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank. These organizations are presiding over a developing system of global trade. Research the views of those who are protesting trade globalization. What are their concerns? What are the views of those who support trade globalization?

Research the mid-century group of British writers called the "Angry Young Men." Based on how critics describe the concerns of these young men, argue whether Lessing's *Play with a Tiger* is a work written by an "angry young woman."

Research the U.S. cold war figure Joseph McCarthy, who headed a congressional committee aimed at suppressing U.S. communists. How were U.S. communists dissuaded from expressing their views?

London was repeatedly bombed by German warplanes during World War II. Yet, the city's most historic constructions survived the war. Research World War II bombing protocol. What were the agreements among nations? Or, explore the problem of looting during World War II and the fate of famous artworks that disappeared during this time.

Compare and Contrast

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: The counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s, a major component of which will be devoted to ecological concerns, are getting their start.

Today: Global warming, pollution, dwindling marine life and fossil fuel supplies, and use of pesticides and hormones in food husbandry are of concern to many.

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*, one of the first books of a new feminist movement that will flourish in the 1970s, is published in 1963.

Today: Statistically, women continue to receive lower wages than men for the same work, but they are able to enter any profession they please.

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: A number of Britain's former colonies shake off imperial rule and gain their independence from Britain in wars of independence.

Today: Britain retains some scattered territories dating from the imperial era, such as the island of Grenada off the coast of South America.

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: As yet, few persons from Britain's former colonies are emigrating to Britain.

Today: London is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the world, with Britain's other larger cities and towns becoming increasingly diverse as well.

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: The cold war is at its height, with the United States government fearing that the nearby communist regime in Cuba will inspire other Central and South American states to become communist.

Today: Cuba remains a communist state under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

Late 1950s—Early 1960s: Many communist party members leave the party in the West as news about Stalinist and other Soviet repressions become widely reported.

Today: The Soviet Union has dissolved, and its member states having become, once again, independent nations.

What Do I Read Next?

The Grass Is Singing (1950) is Lessing's first novel. It is about a young person growing to maturity. It takes place in Lessing's childhood home, Rhodesia (later renamed Zimbabwe).

Bessie Head, a Black novelist born in the Republic of South Africa and forced to flee to Botswana for her anti-apartheid political activities, published *When the Rain Clouds Gather* in 1968.

Burger's Daughter (1979), by South African author Nadine Gordimer, is about a young white woman whose parents are political activists working to end the system of apartheid, which institutionalized the under-class status of the nation's African peoples.

Alan Sillitoe, known as one of Britain's Angry Young Men, wrote *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Its working-class protagonist captures the cynicism of his rootless postwar generation.

Lessing's *The Marriages between Zones Three, Four, and Five* (1980) is the second novel in her "space fiction" series *Canopus in Argos: Archives*.

Further Study

Klein, Carole, *Doris Lessing: A Biography*, Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2000.

Klein's biography discusses Lessing's life after the publication of *The Golden Notebook*.

Knapp, Mona, *Doris Lessing*, Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1984.

Knapp's text is a solid study of Lessing's literary works, including her plays. Knapp's study includes an excellent bibliography of Lessing criticism, reviews, and interviews.

Lessing, Doris, *Walking in the Shade: Volume Two of My Autobiography, 1949—1962*, HarperPerrenial, 1997.

This second volume in Lessing's multivolume autobiography covers the period during which she wrote *Play with a Tiger*.

Sprague, Claire, and Virginia Tiger, *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing*, G. K. Hall, 1986.

Sprague and Tiger's collection includes essays covering all aspects of Lessing's literary career. It also contains a chronology of Lessing's life and publications and a good introductory overview of her work and career.

Wills, A. J., *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1973.

Wills's book covers the history of Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) 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, DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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

DfS 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 Drama 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 DfS series.

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

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama 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 DfS 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.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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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