Plenty Study Guide

Plenty by David Hare

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Introduction

On April 7,1978, *Plenty* was performed for the first time at London's Lyttelton Theatre. Its author, David Hare, directed this production starring Kate Nelligan as the play's protagonist, Susan Traherne. *Plenty* is one of Hare's most successful plays and the work with which he is most closely identified. Despite being oae of the playwright's more popular works, the critical reception to *Plenty* was initially mixed. The play received a rather cool reception in England during its initial-production, yet met with great approval in its U.S. debut in 1980 (the play's 1985 film adaptation was also greeted more favorably in America) The work's American popularity and the reluctance of British critics to embrace *Plenty* are at odds with both the author and the play's pedigree. Hare is an Englishman and *Plenty*—like the bulk of his work—is primarily set in England and deals with distinctly British themes. Like many literary works, however, tune has shown Hare's play to be a valuable part of British (and worldwide) drama, the work gained new respect in the 1980s and 1990s—thanks largely to the successful movie adaptation.

As with the majority of his work, Hare's *Plenty* is noted for its well-defined characters, incisive dialogue, cinematic staging techniques, and a concern for social/political issues (Hare is an active socialist). The character of Susan is often cited as a prime example of the playwright's facility with strong female characters: in *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain,* Steve Grant noted that Traherne is Hare's "most colossal role to date." Susan is a woman conflicted by the triumphs of her past and the mundane nature of her present circumstances. *Plenty* does not follow a linear chronology but rather shifts back and forth through Susan's adult life. In this manner Hare illustrates not only how one's youthful dreams are rarely realized but how a character's personal life can affect the outside world. This conflict of personal versus private life is often seen as one of the play's central themes. Audiences have been attracted to *Plenty* for this reason as well as for the play's unique characters, unconventional structure, and its bittersweet examination of lost youth and dreams.

Author Biography

David Hare was born to Clifford Theodore and Agnes Gilmour Hare on June 5,1947. He was born in St. Leonard's which is located in Sussex, England. His father was a sailor and when he was five, his family moved to the small coastal town of Bexhill-on-Sea. Hare began his career as a playwright, director, and filmmaker while attending Jesus College in Cambridge where he earned his M.A. in English with honors in 1968. Prior to attending university, Hare was educated at Lancing College in West Sussex on a scholarship. In 1968 he founded and subsequently directed a traveling company called the Portable Theatre with which he was associated until 1971. Throughout his career, Hare has served as a resident dramatist, literary manager, and director of other reputable theatre companies, including the Royal Court Theatre in London.

In 1970 he married Margaret Mathieson, who at that time was his theatrical agent. Hare and Mathieson had three children, Joe, Lewis, and Darcy. After ten years of marriage, the couple divorced. Hare married for the second time, in 1992, to Nicole Parhi.

By 1998, Hare had close to thirty published plays, essays, and films as well as several unpublished works to his credit. His writing is noted for its political orientation and its focus on British themes. According to Mel Gussow in a *New York Times Magazine* article, Hare often treats such concerns "as the collapse of the English empire, the debilitating effects of the class system, the myths of patriotism, [and] the loss of personal freedom." Hare is also known for creating politically and morally ambiguous plays, despite his rather clear-cut leftist politics. His first published play, *How Brophy Made Good* was first produced in Brighton, England, at Brighton Combination Theatre in 1969 and was subsequently published in *Gambit* in 1970.

Hare did not begin to receive public attention until he produced *Slag* in April of 1970; however, since then he has been honored for his works on numerous occasions. In 1975 he became the first dramatist to win the presitigious John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and in 1983 *Plenty* received the New York Critics Circle Award for best foreign play. Hare is perhaps best known for *Plenty,* which achieved a high profile when it was made into a film starring Meryl Streep. Despite the fact that Hare's work has received severe criticism at times, he has still developed a fine literary reputation. As Joan Ktzpatrick Dean noted in her book *David Hare,* "Hare has earned an impressive reputation not only as a prolific writer but also as a theater and film director, theater founder, and literary manager." Hare's work is considered to have made an important contribution to his nation's body of contemporary literature.

Plot Summary

Scene 1

The play opens on Easter Sunday in Knightsbridge, England. The year is 1962. In this opening scene Susan Traherne gives her house to her friend of fifteen years, Alice Park. Alice intends to use the house as a home for unmarried mothers. Susan's husband, Raymond Brock, lies on the floor naked, bloodied (though unharmed), and full of Scotch and the drug Nembutal; he does not move throughout the scene. Susan leaves her husband at the end of the scene. She does not, however, take any of his possessions.

Scene 2

Scene 2 flashes back to the year 1943. The location is occupied France, where Susan works for the English government as part of the resistance efforts against Germany in World War II. In this scene, Susan awaits a shipment of explosives and guns to be parachuted down to her. Hearing a plane and thinking the drop is early, Susan flashes a beam of light only to find another English agent, Lazar, who is bailing out of his failing plane. Susan helps him parachute to safety. The two discuss the irony that the more successful they are at diverting the Germans from their military goals, the longer the war seems to continue. While they wait, the shipment drop arrives and it is taken by a Frenchman. Susan and Lazar argue with the man as to whom the supplies belong. Eventually, and by gun point, Susan and Lazar retrieve the shipment of arms from the Frenchman. Susan breaks down and confesses that she is not an agent, only a courier, and that she is afraid to die.

Scene 3

Scene 3 takes place in Brussels in June, 1947. After traveling with Susan in Europe, Mr. Tony Radley, a friend who served in the war with Susan as a wireless operator, drops dead in their hotel lobby. Susan approaches the British Embassy for assistance, pretending to be Tony's wife. After Sir Leonard Darwin, the British Ambassador, leaves the room, Susan asks Raymond Brock, then the Fhird Secretary, to call Pony's wife to **explain** hmv he died. Susan and Raymond discuss whether Raymond should tell the widow that Tony was traveling with Susan. Susan discloses that her relationship with Tony was not unphysical, but she claims nonetheless that it was innocent. Brock decides to lie to Tony's wife. Darwin returns and he and Susan discuss what the Ambassador perceives to be the great rebuilding of Europe in the postwar period.

Scene 4

Scene 4 is set in Pimlico (a suburb of London) in September, 1947. In a conversation with Alice, Susan repeatedly states how much she needs change and that she would

like to move on. Susan also discusses her dissatisfaction with her job and her boss, who she believes is making sexual overtures towards her. Susan makes Raymond, now her lover, an omelette while Alice tells him about a new book she is writing. Susan also tells Alice that Brock thinks that Sir Leonard Darwin, his boss, is "a joke." Towards the end of the scene Susan recalls the war and her involvement with Lazar. She says she often wonders where he is. Susan tells Brock that she would like to try a winter apart. He leaves for Brussels, where he is now posted, without responding to her suggestion. Instead, he says goodbye and gives her a kiss.

Scene 5

This scene lakes place in the London suburb of Temple in May, 1951. Susan meets Mick, a friend of Alice's from the East End and asks him to father her child. She says she would prefer to do it alone but that having someone she barely knows participate is her second choice. Mick agrees to Susan "s plan.

Scene 6

The action returns to Pimlico in December, 1952. Susan complains about her job in advertising and the dishonesty and stupidity that the position requires. Alice paints a nude of her friend Louise from Liverpool for the New Year's Arts Ball. Mick, shows up and he and Susan have a heated discussion about their inability to conceive a child after a year and a half of trying. Susan takes out her gun and shoots it just above Mick's head.

Scene 7

It is October, 1956, in Knightsbridge. Susan and Brock have a dinner party. Their guests include the Third Secretary to the Burmese embassy, M. Aung; his wife, Madame Aung; Alice; and Brock's superior, Sir Leonard Darwin. Susan offends Darwin by making a scene about the English involvement in the Suez Canal fiasco (a conflict that arose over the control of the vital shipping passage. England eventually lost its claim on the canal). M. Aung spends most of his time kissing up to Darwin.

Alone, Brock and Darwin discuss Susan's previous bouts with mental illness. Darwin discloses that he believes that the Israeli/Egyptian war was fabricated so that the English would have an excuse for seizing the canal. Susan has what seems to be a breakdown and the guests leave. At the end of the scene Brock announces that Darwin will resign, and Susan celebrates that change is on the horizon.

Scene 8

Set in Knightsbridge in July, 1961, Scene 8 introduces Alice's student Dorcas Frey. Susan, Brock, Alice, and Dorcas have just come from Darwin's funeral. Susan explains

that she and Brock have been posted in Iran. She also notes that not many people attended Darwin's funeral because he publicly revealed his negative thoughts about the Suez Canal incident. Dorcas asks to borrow money from Susan for an abortion. Alice tells Brock that Dorcas needs the money for a hand operation. Susan says that she would like to remain in England; she and Brock do not return to Iran.

Scene 9

The scene shifts to Whitehall, England, in January, 1962. In the first part of this scene, an unnamed BBC (British Broadcasting Company) radio reporter interviews Susan about her wartime efforts as one of the few female intelligence agents—and, at seventeen, one of the youngest to serve.

Later, Susan talks with Sir Andrew Charleson, the Chief Clerk in charge of personnel decisions, about her husband's career. She requests that he be given a more respectable post. Charleson comments that Brock's performance has always been quite mediocre. Susan tells Charleson that she will shoot herself in six days unless Charleson promotes Brock. She leaves after Charleson and Begley, another diplomat, try to detain her lush countryside, Susan pauses, stating: "There will be days and days and days like this."

Scene 10

It is Easter, 1962, in Knightsbndge. This scene precedes the first scene in the play in which Alice returns to find Brock drunk, drugged, naked, and bloodied. Brock, who no longer works for the Foreign Service, tells Alice that he has told Susan that morning that they ought to sell the house. Brock now works in insurance. Susan is in a frenzy collecting all of the objects around the house. She suggests that Alice use the house to help her work with unmarried mothers. Brock asks Alice to get the Nembutal to sedate Susan and threatens to call the doctor to have Susan admitted to a mental hospital. Susan disregards his threat and suggests that Alice leave for a while so that she and Brock can discuss their problems.

Scene 11

Scene 11 takes place in Blackpool, England, in June of 1962. Susan has had sex with Lazar, with whom she was recently reunited. In bed, Lazar tells Susan that he found her because he heard her on the radio interview. Susan confides that she has not always been well; Lazar confesses that he has sold out to suburbia, marrying and taking a job in a corporate bureaucracy. Susan rolls a cigarette with marijuana and falls to the bed, waking to ask Lazar his real name as he leaves."Lazar," he says, stating his codename. He departs.

Scene 12

The final scene takes place in France. It is August, 1944, and the Resistance has succeeded in liberating the occupied portions of France. Susan appears on a beautiful hillside talking with a Frenchman about the splendor of the day; she is radiant and happy, obviously joyous that her contributions aided in the Resistance's success. She is about to join the village party. The Frenchman complains about his life while Susan, somewhat oblivious to his comments, expresses optimism about the English improving the world. She agrees to have soup with the Frenchman and his wife. Looking out across the

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

In England in 1962, Brock lies naked and sleeping in bed while Susan takes a break from packing; she rolls a cigarette, and smokes it. Alice comes in bringing. A take -out meal - shakes the rain off her, and complains about the misery of living in England. She makes a comment about the blood on Brock's face and on the comical nature of his penis, but then asks whether he's all right. Susan says he's just medicated and drunk. Alice reminds her that the two of them had a fight, but Susan says it was only a short one.

As Alice begins to eat, she offers food to Susan, saying that she must be hungry since she's been packing all night - but Susan refuses it. Susan offers Alice some tips on how to function in the apartment, things like how to deal with the tricky lock and what not to order from the milkman. Alice questions whether Susan must really leave. She asks what she should tell Susan's husband, saying that when he went to sleep the place was still his home. Susan says to tell him the truth and assures Alice that everything will be all right; she's done this kind of thing before. She leaves. A moment later, Brock wakes up and asks for breakfast.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

This brief, tersely written scene has many elements of foreshadowing. The entire scene is foreshadowing of what occurs late in the play. It poses many questions that the rest of the play eventually answers quite directly as to why Susan and Brock were fighting, why Susan was packing, and why Susan has left men this way before. The most important question asks is why Susan's life seems so intense? This pivotal question anchors the dramatic and thematic narrative lines of the play.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

In France in 1943 during World War II, a radio broadcast is heard, an English voice, speaking in French, is giving a coded message. As the broadcast finishes, Lazar appears, trying to disentangle himself from his parachute. A moment later, Susan runs on, takes out a revolver, and speaks to him in French. Lazar reveals himself to be British, and their conversation reveals they are both working for the Resistance, fighting to undermine the Nazi invasion, and that Susan is waiting for a shipment of supplies to be dropped. Lazar suggests that they avoid looking at each other so that they would not be able to identify one another if t captured. Susan agrees, saying that it's part of the rules.

Susan offers Lazar a bicycle and gives hints as to how he can survive in France. Lazar reveals that from the glimpse he caught of her earlier, he remembers seeing her in a recruitment office. As Susan realizes that he knows who she is; a plane flies overhead and drops a package in a nearby field. Susan and Lazar watch as a shadowy figure runs out from the trees, grabs the package, and runs in their direction. Susan meets him and declares that the package is hers. The Frenchman argues that he needs it more than she does. Lazar takes Susan's gun and points it at the Frenchman, who then puts the parcel down. The Frenchman angrily says that the French don't need the help of the British and he leaves.

Susan complains bitterly about the ungrateful French. Lazar gives her back her gun and prepares to leave. Susan apologizes for her behavior, saying she's only a courier and isn't really supposed to be doing this kind of thing, but there's nobody else available. As Lazar tries to go, Susan tells him that her friend and ally Tony has been taken to a Nazi prison camp, that things are going badly and she's very frightened. Lazar ends up taking her in his arms and comforting her. He describes about the way sound waves never fully fade away but continue on out into the universe forever and the sky seeming much as "a mackerel sky." As soon as he sees that Susan has recovered he composure, he goes out. Susan follows, asking his name.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

As the action of the play unfolds, we understand that this incident was the high point of Susan's life. We also come to understand that the events of this scene in particular, and of the war in general, set the standard for the emotional, social and political intensity she needs in her life.

Key examples of this intensity can be found in Susan's encounters with Lazar. Later in the play, she describes in detail its impact on her, revealing that because of its moments of pure, vulnerable, intimate, connection, it became the benchmark by which she

measured all other relationships. This idea brings a different meaning to their exchange about knowing each other, suggesting that on some unconscious, non-verbal, non-visual level they know each other's souls. The idea is reinforced by the way the image of "the mackerel sky" is repeated later in the play, in the context of a relationship that seems to have the same kind of immediacy and passion. Taken in the context of the play as a whole, the intensity of her life and the relationship answer the question of why Susan comments that she has left many men in the way she leaves Brock in the first scene. Nothing that she does, and none of the men she's with, can live up to the excitement we see her experiencing here. The gun is an important symbol of that excitement, and appears later at key points in the action. Another symbol is found with Lazar's reference to sound waves, which continue on forever in the same way as Susan's emotional memories affect the rest of her life.

The appearance of the Frenchman is echoed by the appearance of a second Frenchman at the end of the play. This "bookending" of the story brings Susan full circle, with the grudging acceptance of her by the second Frenchman contrasting to the first Frenchman's resentment - suggesting that her life has, after all, been worth something.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Brussels, June 1947. A radio announcer speaks in French, announcing an orchestral performance. Susan meets with Darwin, a bureaucrat, and Brock, who at this point is Darwin's assistant. Their conversation reveals that Susan's husband Tony died in their hotel, and that Darwin is making arrangements for the body to be embalmed. Susan asks why embalming is necessary, and Darwin uncomfortably tells her it's to ensure that accidents to the body, like explosions because of changes in air pressure on airplanes, don't happen. Darwin excuses himself to make arrangements for the flight home, asking if Susan wants to accompany the body and whether there are any children. Susan says she will go back with the body, and that there are no children.

Once Darwin is gone, Susan comments that Darwin doesn't like Brock. Brock says that Darwin is much more concerned with etiquette and the way things are done than anything else, adding that he was hoping for a much more exciting posting, but will accept this one until something better comes along. He asks Susan what Tony did in the war, and Susan explains that he was a radio operator and she was a courier. She comments that they weren't married, explaining that they had been friends and colleagues for a long time and that they both missed the excitement of the war and being in the Resistance. Their affair, she says, was an attempt to recapture some of that excitement. She says Tony had a wife and three children, adding that she wants Brock to call them, tell them what happened, and not tell the truth about Tony's being with her.

Brock seems hesitant to lie. He hints that she should perhaps get on with her life and not be so affected by the war. Susan says she's has nothing to apologize for, then talks about how she wasn't all that fond of Tony, calling him "slow-moving." Brock asks her to dinner, saying that he'd like to talk with her more. Susan refuses, saying that she wants him to just look at her for who and what she is in this moment and then make his judgments.

Darwin returns, saying that all the arrangements have been made, then goes out to meet his wife for dinner. Brock tells Susan that he's made arrangements to call Tony's family, and that he's decided to lie about Tony's being with Susan. He also asks whether she's really going back with the body, and she says no. He takes off his jacket and drops it on the floor, asking her to remind him to cancel her reservation.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

This scene contains the first example of the way that Susan creates excitement in her life to fill the void left by the war - her affair with Tony, who is the man whom she mentioned to Lazar had been taken to a prison camp. Her conversation with Brock reveals that she is, on some level, aware of what she's doing, but subsequent action

reveals that she isn't aware of either how deeply the void inside her goes or the desperate lengths to which she'll go to fill it.

The implication of the scene's final moments between Susan and Brock is that she's looking to find excitement with another affair, this time with Brock. Because we've seen Brock in the first scene and understand that that scene takes place fifteen years later, we understand that this relationship is more important and more lasting than perhaps either Susan or Brock intend it at this point. Meanwhile, aspects of the trouble in the relationship are foreshadowed by Susan's comments about Tony being slow moving, a concern that later emerges in terms of Brock and his career, predicting the confrontation later in the play between Susan and Charleson, another diplomat like Darwin.

The brief discussion about embalming and unexpected explosions symbolically refers to Susan. In her post-war life she feels embalmed, emotionally dead and spiritually immobilized. The comments about sudden explosions refer to her explosions of emotion and action, which serve to create the longed for excitement in her life.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

In England in 1947, a British radio broadcaster announces a program of music written by a composer who suffered from Parkinson's disease (making the scores difficult to read). Lights come up on Susan's apartment. Brock sleeps on the bed; there's a large pink box nearby, and Susan keeps her revolver close. Alice sits on the floor inhaling the smoke from the mouthpiece of a hookah. The conversation reveals that Alice is a writer, and enjoys stealing ideas from other writers; that they became friends when Alice worked briefly in Susan's office. Susan complains about the boring nature of her work. She gives a long speech about her boring boss seems determined to have an affair with her, and that she has to get out. She starts oiling and cleaning her gun.

Alice asks how she feels about Brock, and Susan explains that they're able to see each other only for a couple of days each week. Alice comments that Susan should look for someone younger, but Susan calls young men "boring." Brock wakes up, and Susan goes out to make him an omelet.

Brock notices that Susan was cleaning her gun, and Alice reassures him by saying Susan was only fondling it. They make small talk about Alice not having a place to live, that Brock always brings gifts and that money is easy to come by for him. He says that in the next few post war years, everybody is going to have lots of money. Brock talks about how he feels that he and Susan are similar in nature and very compatible. Alice talks about her new book, revealing that it's based on a real incident about how a woman juror interpreted a handwritten piece of evidence in a trial as a love note.

Susan brings in the omelet. Alice puts aside the hookah, saying it's not working for her - Susan hints that Brock might be able to bring her back some marijuana from Morocco. The security guards give him a pass since he's a diplomat and all his fellow diplomats are "buffoons." She then speaks crudely of Darwin, which leads Brock to speak angrily to her about the words she chooses to use. Alice excuses herself so they can argue in private.

Susan eats the omelet as Brock asks her whether she's planning to let Alice live with her. Susan says Alice makes her laugh. Brock apologizes, that he knows his work is dull but that's the only thing he knows. This leads Susan to tell him more about her life in the war and how exciting she finds her work. She also tells him about Lazar, says her experience showed her the best of people - which she always thinks about that time of her life. Susan suggests that she and Brock spend the winter apart and really think about where they want the relationship to go. Brock says a winter together would be better, but Susan says her job and her boss are too important for her to leave. Brock admits that he's come to understand that when she talks about the war and starts cleaning her gun, he is going to hear more lies. He goes out, telling her that she needs to get a license for her gun.

Alice comes back. When Susan asks whether she heard the conversation; Alice says that she was writing notes to use in her book. As Susan gets ready to go to bed and Alice gets comfortable on a cot - they make plans for the next day. Alice remarks, as they turn off the lights, that Brock believes that in the future there will be "peace and plenty."

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

The character of Alice provides a clear and vivid contrast to Susan. Alice finds excitement everywhere in her life, an aspect of her personality represented by her experience with the hookah and later experiments with lesbianism. Her comments on stealing from other writers, however, are a reference to the way Susan finds excitement in her life by trying to get reactions out of other people - in effect stealing their emotions to fill her own emptiness. We see examples of this throughout the rest of the play, most notably in the dinner party scene. In this scene, it becomes clear that she does this because she, unlike Alice, can't see excitement anywhere except in her past. As pointed out by Brock, this is represented by the presence of her gun and the way she talks about the war. On the other hand, Susan's description of what she experienced in the war shows more clearly than ever what she compares her life to. Given the way she expresses herself and her feelings in this scene, it's easier to understand why all the experiences she's had subsequently have fallen short of her expectations and needs. Once again, we're offered a deeper insight into the real personality of Susan.

Another contrast to Susan can be found in the radio announcer's comments about the composer with Parkinson's disease - someone who fought to be fully who he was in spite of what others might see as a handicap. Susan is held back by her past, but has defined herself by the very things that limit her. Yet another contrast appears, for the first time, in Brock's comments about prosperity and plenty. Like Alice, Brock sees the world as full of opportunity, where Susan sees it as full of emptiness. This means that "plenty," both as a repeated word and as a concept becomes an ironic comment on Susan's perspectives and experiences. Susan increasingly sees herself as having nothing.

There are a few elements of foreshadowing in this scene. One occurs in the conversation between Alice and Susan about younger men that foreshadows Susan's relationship with a younger man in the next scene. Another example is the appearance of the gun and Brock's comments that foreshadow the violence that explodes from Susan in the second act. Brock's reference to money also foreshadows the thematic references to "plenty" later in the play and the second act scene in which Susan comments on how she and Brock are "rotten" with money.

The juxtaposition of Brock's comments about how he and Susan agree about Alice's story about the misinterpreted love note suggests that Brock's perceptions are a misinterpretation. This is an idea that is reinforced as we watch the tensions between Susan and Brock grow throughout the rest of the play.

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

In England in 1951, on the banks of a river, Susan waits for a fireworks display to begin. She is joined by Mick, a young man who talks about a street deal he's making for several hundred cheese graters and then about Susan's barrage balloon. Mick asks what it says, and Susan tells him about advertising "Bovril," a dried soup product. They talk about a festival that Susan organized and that she's thinking of going into advertising.

Susan suddenly announces that she wants to have a child, explaining that she doesn't want to get married, but just wants the experience of having a baby. She doesn't want to compromise her strong-minded personality so she wants to have a quiet marriage just to become pregnant. Susan adds that she thought asking someone she barely knew to be the father would be just the right thing. Mick says it probably wouldn't be great for the child not knowing his father, but Susan says that England won't always be so uptight about "bastard" children. Mick asks why Susan chose him, and she reveals that it's because she likes him and because they wouldn't see each other much. He laughingly compares the arrangement she's proposing to the fact that he's got hundreds of cheese graters to sell - that both arrangements are a bit odd. Susan makes a deal to buy the graters, and the implication is that they've also agreed to try to become pregnant. Susan invites Mick to stay and watch the fireworks with her. He refers to the sky as a "mackerel" sky.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

This scene illustrates just how far Susan is prepared to go to have excitement in her life, and also how boring she feels that life has become. The excitement is indicated by her asking Mick to be the father of her baby, a desire of what we know about who Susan is clearly is not coming from any kind of maternal instinct. The boredom is indicated, more symbolically, by the reference to the balloon and "Bovril." A barrage balloon was used in the war to drop bombs and suggests that it is being used as a tool for advertising is a significant comedown in terms of importance. The fact that the balloon is being used to advertise makes the point even more vividly.

Mick's reference to the "mackerel" sky illustrates what Susan believes this venture into motherhood is going to mean do for her. The phrase is a deliberate echo of Lazar's earlier comment. Its use in this context tells us Susan sees her liaison with Mick as carrying the same emotional and spiritual charge of excitement as her brief encounter with Lazar. Her expectations and hopes are dashed, as we see in the next scene.

Act 1, Scene 6

Act 1, Scene 6 Summary

In England in 1952, in Susan's apartment, Susan works at a drafting table on an advertising assignment while Alice applies paint to the nude body of a young woman, Louise. Susan complains that the work she's doing on an advertisement for shoes is hell, and asks rhetorically what she's doing with her life. Alice ironically comments that Susan has sold out, and then tells Louise to turn over so she can paint the other side. Susan says that all she has to do to create a good ad is to think stupidly, but believes she's not stupid enough.

As Susan rips up her work, Alice and Louise talk playfully about the way Alice is painting Louise to represent a tree, and about other guests at the party they will be attending. While they are talking, Mick appears. Susan reacts angrily, saying that they agreed they would never meet again. Mick says because it's New Year's Eve, he wanted to see her. Susan makes him sit down and explain exactly what he's there for. Louise goes out to get dressed.

Susan explains to Alice that she and Mick had been trying to make a baby for about a year but that it hadn't worked - adding that it's made them both feel pretty awful. She goes on to say that she hated the whole experience, especially having sex in Mick's disgusting bedroom while his mother was downstairs watching television. Mick angrily suggests that she enjoyed the drama of it, but Susan says that the whole experience has broken her heart. Mick suggests that Susan thinks it's his fault that she's not pregnant. Susan retorts with that was exactly the kind of comment she'd been hoping to avoid. She sits down and goes back to work.

Louise comes out. Alice tries to get her to tie some branches around her wrists so she'll look more like a tree, but Louise says she'll just go to the party as herself. Susan asks Mick to leave. Mick bursts out about how "fucked up" they all are and blames Susan. He keeps talking as Susan gets her gun. As Alice tries to calm Mick down Susan fires three shots into the ceiling over his head. Mick falls to the ground in terror.

Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis

This scene illustrates how Susan is sinking even further into an unfulfilling life and how frustrated she's becoming. The way in which she's doing feels profoundly false to her is represented by the mini-drama played out by Alice and Louise. Alice's imposing a costume on Louise represents the way in which Susan is trying to impose a life on herself, while Louise's rejection of what Alice is doing represents the way that Susan's temper explodes, leading to her firing the gun. Mick's appearance isn't really the focus of Susan's anger; it is merely a catalyst, the trigger for her explosion. The reappearance

of the gun again symbolizes the power that Susan's past has over her. It is used in this case to symbolize the way in which her past has destructive power over her present.

The details about the squalor of the rooms in which they made love foreshadow the squalor in which Susan has her later reunion with Lazar (the man from her encounter in France). Like the earlier reference to the "mackerel" sky, the squalor represents the way that both relationships meant the same thing to Susan, impulsive expressions of intense feeling. Mick's comments about Susan's enjoyment of the drama reinforce this parallel, but also lead us to see again how the men in Susan's life seem to be more aware of who she is and what her motivations are, than she is herself. Susan self-righteously refuses to even entertain the idea that they may be right and continues, perhaps self-indulgently and irresponsibly, to feel and act in exactly the way she wants and thinks she needs.

Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 7 Summary

In England in 1956 a dinner party is in progress, with Brock entertaining a Burmese businessman, Mr. Wong. Darwin comes in, apologizing for being late. While Brock is out getting his wife, Wong says he's heard of Darwin's days in the Far East, and that it's an honor to meet him. Susan comes in, followed by Brock, and we understand that they're now married. She welcomes Darwin, comments on his difficult week and tells him, at some length and in sarcastically extravagant language, that he can forget all about "the Suez Canal." She offers to go find him some food, and then suggests that Wong should go with her - hinting that Darwin and Brock need to talk.

When Susan and Wong are gone, Darwin asks for a drink. He comments on Susan's behavior and asks whether she's mentally ill. Brock says she just has strong feelings, then as he hands Darwin his drink, confesses that a few years ago when Susan hung out with an artsy, eccentric crowd, there was, in fact, some mental illness. Darwin comments that in the diplomatic service, a mad wife "almost guarantees promotion," but Brock insists that Susan isn't mad. Darwin changes the subject, angrily complaining to Brock in some detail about the diplomatic and political mess that England is in as a result of the British invasion of the Suez Canal. He refers to it as a betrayal of the diplomatic service by the politicians. Brock comments on the way that Eden, the Prime Minister at the time, ordered the invasion because he wanted to convince everyone who had been calling him weak that he was, in fact, strong. He goes on to suggest that Eden's actions had exactly the opposite effect, then comments on how people often do what they think other people expect of them, and that it often goes wrong.

Susan, Alice, Mr. Wong and Mrs. Wong come in laughing. Susan says they've been discussing a new Ingmar Bergman film, and Mrs. Wong refers to Bergman as a Norwegian. Susan suggests they've interrupted an important conversation, and makes pointed comments about the reasons for Brock and Darwin's silence. Just as pointedly, Darwin asks Mrs. Wong to talk further about the film. Susan doesn't let her get very far, however, commenting that her favorite part was the scene set in the mental hospital and discusses her own psychiatric history, including the way that she married Brock because he reminded her of her father. Mrs. Wong starts telling the story of the film by referring to a woman who hates her husband, but Susan interrupts with memories of the war, weeping as her story takes her to a memory of a young English woman whose lover of one night died in a Nazi prison camp. As she goes on to talk about the way she prefers to sleep with men she's only just met, Brock swears at her and tells her to shut up. Susan swears back and says she'd be happy to be quiet if anyone said anything worth being quiet for. Darwin and the Wongs leave, Darwin angrily telling Mrs. Wong that Ingmar Bergman is Swedish, not Norwegian.

Brock makes a statement that Darwin is going to resign. Susan talks about how exciting this week has been, how everything is open to change and possibility. She then talks

about the amount of food she's prepared for Darwin, saying that there's "plenty," and suggesting that they eat again.

Act 1, Scene 7 Analysis

The Suez Canal crisis was a political, diplomatic and military confrontation between England, France and Egypt. As Brock mentions, it was an effort by the British Prime Minister of the time to show that both he and his country could be strong and forceful in the face of what was perceived as a rebellion by Egypt, which England still viewed as a colony. The reference is symbolically important in that the reasons behind the conflict, is a need to display power, are the same reasons that Susan says what she says and does what she does in this scene. In other words, Susan is again trying to create excitement, drama and intense emotion in her world by showing how she can control and manipulate the conversation in the same way England was trying to control and manipulate the situation in Egypt. This is an example of the previously discussed way in which she fills the emotional void within her with emotions triggered by her in other people.

Darwin's diplomatic helplessness and resentment in the face of England's actions mirror similar feelings in Brock in the face of his wife. Brock's comments on the results of people doing what is expected of them are a comment on his choices to marry his wife, to, support her, and make excuses for her. Mrs. Wong's misunderstanding about Ingmar Bergman's nationality reinforces this idea, suggesting again how people think one thing about a person when, in fact, the opposite is true. This refers to the way Brock thinks one way about Susan when the reality is quite different.

Darwin's comments about mad wives and promotion are an ironic foreshadowing of the scene to come in which Susan goes to Brock's superior and insists that Brock be given a promotion. Mrs. Wong's comments on the way the Bergman film begins with a woman who hates her husband can easily be interpreted as referring to Susan's feelings about Brock. The most powerful commentary on the state of both her marriage and her mind emerges through Susan's memories of the war. Her recollections take her to a deeply emotional place that surprises everyone with its immediacy. When she recalls the story of the young woman whose one-night lover died, a story we can take as referring to a personal experience, it is the first time we see how intensely her feelings and memories affect her, and how damaged she is. This illuminates another aspect of who Susan is, as does the fact that she immediately covers up her vulnerability by making the calculatedly distasteful comment about sleeping with men she doesn't know. This masterly crafted line is effective on three levels. It functions as a cover up, as a confirmation of our suspicions about who Susan really is, and as the catalyst for high points of emotion and drama in the play.

The comment Susan makes about "plenty" that closes the scene and the act is an ironic comment on the way that Susan continues to try to fill the void inside her with drama and manufactured feeling. The line suggests that the plentiful emotions she generates still leave her empty, still searching for the intensity of feeling she remembers so fondly

and longingly. This scene, therefore, dramatizes the play's central theme, that longing and searching for what one can't have leads to destruction.

Act 2, Scene 8

Act 2, Scene 8 Summary

In England in 1961, a priest appears and speaks poetically about the shortness of life, how man blooms briefly then dies. As he speaks Brock and Alice appear, accompanied by a young woman named Dorcas, who is eventually revealed to be Alice's lover. Alice and Brock remove the dustsheets from the furniture in the room, commenting on how grim funerals are and how the house is dusty and unused. Their conversation reveals that they've just come from Darwin's funeral.

Susan appears with an arm full of books. A stage direction describes her as being calmer. Alice introduces her to Dorcas, and their conversation reveals that Alice is Dorcas' teacher. Alice and Dorcas banter happily about the way that Dorcas is the daughter of an aristocrat, that aristocrats are generally stupid, and that Alice is working to make Dorcas and other aristocratic girls aware that there is more to life than their ancestry. Susan asks Brock to make some tea. While he's gone, she explains to Dorcas that they've been in Iran on a diplomatic posting and felt they had to come back when they heard of Darwin's death. She goes on to comment on how Darwin always spoke his mind, particularly about the Suez incident. Alice explains to Dorcas what the incident was, says that Darwin's outspokenness was why there weren't more people at his funeral, and makes jokes about her dread of death, saying that one of her biggest fears is to be buried alive.

Susan says that Alice told her that Dorcas needed help. Dorcas and Alice explain that Dorcas needs an abortion and can't pay for it. Dorcas says that Alice felt compelled to help because she introduced her to the man who fathered the child, and adds that all she really wanted was some drugs - that having sex with him was the price. As Susan comments that killing a child will be no problem, she opens the door and finds Brock returning with the tea. As he pours the tea, he says that the driver has come to take them to the airport; Susan gets her purse and writes a check, saying that she needs some tea to wash down her pill.

Brock and Alice make small talk about Iran, and Brock refers to the effect that seeing people in poverty has on him. Susan asks whether she should make the check out to cash, and Dorcas says, "Yes." Susan explains to Brock that she's lending Dorcas some money, and Alice says that Dorcas needs to pay for surgery on her hands. Susan asks Brock to check a lock on one of her suitcases and he leaves the room. Susan gives Dorcas the check. When Dorcas thanks her, Susan tells hers not to bother; they're "rotten" with money. Brock returns and bids his farewells, saying that their term has been extended for two years and invites Alice to visit them. Dorcas helps him out with the cases, hoping that they won't be long, because her favorite class at school is that evening.

When they're gone Susan and Alice comment about how stupid and sexy Dorcas is. Susan then goes around pulling off more dustcovers, commenting that she knew if she came home, she wouldn't want to go back. Just as she's saying that she still thinks Alice is exciting, Brock returns, asking if Susan's ready to go.

Act 2, Scene 8 Analysis

This scene contains several comments and illuminations about Susan, her situation, and on who she is. These begin with the comments by the priest, which can be understood as comments on Susan's own brief blooming in the war, and how she's become faded and dead ever since. Susan's comments on Darwin's outspokenness are ironic, given that her outspokenness has done nothing but create difficulties for her. Alice's comments on Darwin's outspokenness could easily be seen as a reflection of Susan's own outspokenness, while her comments about being alive can be interpreted as a reference to the way Susan feels buried alive. Finally, Susan's reference to a pill combines with the stage direction describing her as calmer to suggest that she is on some kind of medication, perhaps something like Valium.

The central tension in this scene arises through discussion of Dorcas' pregnancy. Susan's line about how easy it is to kill a child suggests the possibility that that's exactly what did happen, that Susan got pregnant, realized it wasn't going to be as exciting as she thought, and had an abortion. Meanwhile, Brock's comments about the poverty in Iran coupled with Susan's comments about how they're rotten with money suggest that the two of them have grown apart from the real world, with "rotten" being a fairly accurate description of how Susan feels about both their situation and their money.

The whole point of this scene is to get Susan to the point of being ready to leave Brock. Because so much of the scene has been about other subjects, the revelation of her decision comes as a surprise. We've had no indication that she's thinking in this way, and as a result are taken aback in the same way that Brock must be. On another level, however, we're not surprised given that the conversation about Iran has indicated that it's a fairly unexciting life. Although Susan seems quieter and probably medicated, she seems to be still searching for the kind of excitement like becoming involved with the Dorcas situation. This helps explain her closing comment to Alice that doesn't come as a surprise since we've known how much Susan craves excitement right from the beginning of the play.

Act 2, Scene 9

Act 2, Scene 9 Summary

We hear an excerpt from a radio interview in which Susan discusses her experiences during the war in France. The interviewer asks whether she thinks that her superiors behaved carelessly and without regard for the people on the ground, and she firmly says that wasn't the case at all. When the interviewer asks her whether she keeps in touch with other agents, she tells him that she doesn't - saying it's not a kind of club.

The scene moves to a diplomatic office. Susan meets with Charleson, the man who became Brock's superior after Darwin's death. In careful, diplomatic language, Susan explains that she's come to find out what Brock's prospects are for advancement, saying that he's moved upwards in the ranks more slowly than they were both led to believe. Charleson tells her, also in diplomatic language, that everybody in the service is perceived as either fast or slow, and Brock is perceived as slow.

When Susan pushes for more information, Charleson points out that Brock's sudden decision to not return to his post in Iran worked against him. Susan points out that was because of her inability to go back. Then she accuses Charleson of blocking Brock's advancement deliberately. With intense, careful tact, Charleson reminds her that their meeting was to be purely an exchange of information, and the only information he can give her is to confirm that Brock is indeed moving slowly. Susan says that it's important that she not impede her husband's progress. Charleson seems to understand that she's offering sexual favors in exchange for Brock's promotion, and tells her in no uncertain terms that it won't work. Brock simply doesn't have the raw materials of courage, passion, intellect and tact to go as far as Susan clearly wants. When she asks him whether he hates being in a business where he's not allowed to speak his mind, Charleson says that that's the nature of the work that the way a diplomat behaves is all there he has. He concludes by saying that that's a lesson both Brock and Susan need to learn.

Susan stands, and tells Brock if doesn't get a better job that she's going to kill herself. Charleson calls for an assistant and Susan prepares to leave saying that she's got to get to a reception. When Charleson gently tries to get her to see a doctor, she refuses, becomes hysterical, and then says she doesn't always deal well with people. Before she goes out, she says that Charleson may have actually destroyed her husband.

Act 2, Scene 9 Analysis

The interview on the radio contains four pieces of important foreshadowing. The discussion of whether Susan's superiors behaved badly foreshadows the way in which she believes Brock's superiors have behaved badly. The broadcast plays an important role in a later scene, when we find that it was the catalyst for Susan being reunited with

Lazar. The discussion about whether Susan's superiors behaved badly also foreshadows the way she accuses Charleson of deliberately slowing Brock's career, while her comment about not meeting with other agents is an ironic foreshadowing of the reunion she has with Lazar.

From the conversation between Susan and Charleson, we understand that following the previous scene Brock and Susan didn't return to Iran. It seems possible that in coming to ask for a promotion for her husband, Susan is acting out of a sense of guilt. This idea is reinforced by her comments about not wanting to impede his career, and possibly her exit comment in which she refers to Brock's destruction, which we can interpret as an outward projection of her own sense of responsibility onto Charleson. There is every possibility that she's just acting out of her own drive for excitement, with the content of her discussion with Charleson. This idea is supported by her reaction to the appearance of Charleson's assistant and refers to the way she met Brock when he was Darwin's assistant. It implies that Brock is still nothing more than Charleson's gofer and dogsbody. The idea that she's here to create more excitement in her life is supported by her suicide threat, which is clearly not serious yet has the desired effect on Charleson. Up to this point, like the other men in Susan's life, he's been able to see she is, acting out of a desire to manipulate and control. At this point, his automatic reaction is to panic, which feeds Susan in exactly the way she hoped.

Act 2, Scene 10

Act 2, Scene 10 Summary

A few months later, the setting is the same room as the first scene of the play indicates that we're back where we began. Alice sits at a table stuffing envelopes, while Brock works on the accounts. They discuss how restless Susan is, how a friend of Alice's has had a sex change operation, and how her latest girlfriend has gone off to be with a fat, rich, conservative politician. Brock talks about having left his job, about how he and Susan are going to have to learn to get along without quite so much money, and how he thinks that living that way might do them some good. He adds that being in the civil service suited him, saying that all the hypocrisy involved in government made life simpler. He asks whether Alice was ever interested in a regular job, and she says that she always thought that lust, and its resultant relationships, would be enough of a career. She says that she's grown out of it - that's why she's stuffing envelopes for an activist society.

Susan comes in from the next room and tells them to leave. Brock comments that there's blood on her hands, but she says she ripped a fingernail peeling wallpaper. She goes through the room, talking about getting the house ready to sell. Brock quietly asks Alice to get some medication out of the drawer. As Alice does so, Susan suggests, that instead of selling the house they should just give it to Alice to use as a shelter for troubled women. She talks throwing some of their souvenirs out a bedroom window, and then goes out into the hall.

As Brock looks for their doctor's phone number, he accuses Alice of plotting with Susan to get the house, but Alice says she knew nothing. Susan returns and begins throwing things into crates. Brock threatens her with being locked up in a mental hospital. Susan ignores him, asking Alice if any of her troubled women can use her evening clothes. Brock angrily accuses her of never facing life, of being selfish and determined to destroy other people's happiness. He says that for fifteen years he's loved her, supported her and tried to help her, and will continue to do so until she's well (which mean admitting that she's failed at her life). He concludes by saying that he's going to be as ruthless and selfish as she has been, call the doctor, and have her committed.

As he goes out Alice asks Susan if she's really thought about what she's doing. Susan responds by saying that it's Easter weekend, there's no way Brock can follow through on his threat because there's no doctors around. When Brock returns, Susan tells him that they need to sit down and talk, hinting that Alice should go out. When she's gone, Susan stands next to the pills found by Alice, pours Brock a drink and asks him to sit down.

Act 2, Scene 10 Analysis

The first part of the conversation between Brock and Alice reveals how dissatisfied Alice is with her life. Dissatisfaction is also what we hear from Brock, who instead of advancing as Susan had hoped has instead left his job. All this complaining illuminates what's going on behind Susan's explosion of energy that we understand to be a manic episode. Her violent acts of cleansing are undertaken in the hope of starting over and perhaps once and for all finding the excitement she's craved for so long. These actions, however, are ironic when put against Alice's comments about being dissatisfied, suggesting if Susan had found the excitement she craved, it ultimately would have left her unsatisfied, with even more people damaged in her wake.

The blood on her hands symbolizes this damage, both done to herself and to other people, damage referred to by Brock in the speech in which his long simmering frustration with Susan comes to an explosive boil. His observation about how Susan has never actually faced life is particularly accurate. The argument could be made that Susan has faced life head on and tried to make it into what she needs it to be. This is another of the play's key thematic questions - what is facing life, accepting it as it is or challenging it to become what you want it to be?

Act 2, Scene 11

Act 2, Scene 11 Summary

A few months later, Susan lays on a bed with Lazar, the man with whom she had her key romantic encounter in France. They make small talk including references to the filthiness of the room, and then Lazar comments on how glad he is that Susan met him. He explains that he heard her on a radio broadcast and tracked her down through the broadcaster. Susan warns him that sometimes she loses control, saying that she married her husband because she shot a man once and her husband got her out of her arrest. Lazar asks whether she ever sees him, and she says she's stripped away everything she ever was, adding that the only real dignity in life is in living single and alone. She hopes there's someone out there who has lived in the way she has.

Lazar asks whether she remembers what happened between them, and she says she remembers everything saying that when it happened, she let herself feel without thinking anything at all. Lazar says he remembers thinking that he loved her, and tells her again. Susan talks about how soon they'll be able to leave referring to their reunion as a tribute to all their comrades in the war who died.

Lazar tries to start a conversation about how dull his life has become, how he's given in and become a bureaucrat with a wife and children. Susan quickly makes as if to leave, asking him to kiss her. He goes to her, but she falls onto the bed. He turns off the lights, collects his suitcase and prepares to go, commenting at the door that a good undercover agent never lets people know he'd been there. In the dark, Susan asks him to tell her his name. Lazar gives her his code name. He opens the door, and we're back in the brilliantly lit fields of France.

Act 2, Scene 11 Analysis

The possibility hinted at in Alice's speech in the previous scene, that if Susan ever found the kind of intensity of feeling she was looking for she'd discover that it isn't enough , is clearly confirmed in this scene. Even though Susan finds the recreation of her earlier high point in France in just about every detail, she's in a hurry to get away. This shows that such experiences aren't enough, that she's always going to be searching for more excitement. In other words, she's addicted to it. In this scene more than ever, we see that this addiction - to excitement, to adrenaline, to intense feeling - is the controlling part of who Susan is. To continue the metaphor, her encounter with Lazar is her latest fix, but when he begins talking about what his life has become, it quickly becomes clear to both Susan and us that he has become too much like Brock for comfort. We have no doubt when Susan leaves that she's going to spend the rest of her life looking even more desperately for the next fix. Lazar seems to recognize this and that Susan has no interest in dealing with reality. This is why he doesn't give her his real name but his code

name, and again proves that the men in her life understand Susan better than she does herself.

The transition into France suggests that in Susan's mind she's back where she was happiest, an idea born out by the final scene of the play.

Act 2, Scene 12

Act 2, Scene 12 Summary

In France in 1944 in the final days of the war Susan encounters a Frenchman. At first they speak in French, but then switch to English as they talk about how beautiful the day is and how Susan is going into town to join the party celebrating the liberation. The Frenchman says he's staying on his farm to continue his work - no matter what. He comments that his wife will be making soup, that in the same way as the work in the fields is still there, her soup will still be awful.

Susan looks down at the village, and tells the Frenchman to look at the children, lighting celebratory bonfires in the square. The Frenchman says again that he has to work, but Susan gets him to admit that he's actually very happy. He then comments on how he thought the English always hid their feelings. Susan agrees, the Frenchman says that doing that is "stupid;" Susan says that things will change and the world will improve. The Frenchman invites her back to his home for soup. Susan goes with him, saying that there will be days and days like this one.

Act 2, Scene 12 Analysis

There are moments earlier in the scene when we believe that what we're watching is the beginning of another of Susan's quick sexual encounters, and the ending of the scene doesn't quite dispel that idea. In the play's last moments, we understand a deeper and more important truth and finally discover the core of who Susan is.

This scene shows us that at the end of the war, Susan was filled with hope, both for the future of the world and by implication for her own life. We therefore understand that the true vacuum at Susan's heart, the void that she has so desperately tried to fill, was left by the disappearance of this hope as she continued to experience life's disappointments. These include all the incidents we've seen throughout the play, the death of her lover, her job in advertising, her unfulfilled desire for a child, and above all the various frustrations in her marriage to Brock.

The scene also brings us back to the key thematic question Brock posed earlier. Would Susan have been braver to accept life as it is, the way the Frenchman, Brock, Lazar and all the other men in her life do? Or in trying to bend life into a satisfying, fulfilling shape, has Susan in fact been braver than all of them combined? Has she struggled to deny the plenty around her, or has she struggled to create more, on her own terms and according to her own needs? The action of the play would appear to suggest the former, with Susan herself in her final line seeming to believe that plenty is out there to be found. The implication is that for the rest of her life, she will continue to look in all the wrong places. On the other hand, the fact that the play ends with an expression of hope, even though it actually took place in the past, suggests that there is still the possibility

for Susan of a full, fulfilling life. This means that the ultimate answer to the question of who Susan is - she is (like all of us) both hope and desperation, excitement and fear, grounded in the day to day, but looking skyward to tomorrow.

Bibliography

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Characters

Madame Aung

Madame Aung accompanies her husband to Susan and Raymond's dinner party in 1956. She is characterized by Hare as "small, tidy and bright." Her only action in the play is to begin to tell the story of an Ingmar Bergman film she recently viewed. She mistakenly states that Bergman is Norwegian and Darwin firmly corrects her by mentioning that the famed director is in fact Swedish.

Monsieur Aung

Monsieur (often abbreviated as M.) Aung is the First Secretary of the Burmese Embassy whom Susan and Raymond entertain in their Rnightsbridge home in October of 1956. The stage directions describe M. Aung as "almost permanently smiling—short [and] dogmatic." Aung acts quite flattered to be in the presence of Sir Leonard Darwin and is overtly complimentary and deferential to him throughout Scene 7.

Raymond Brock

Susan first meets Brock when she approaches him at the British Embassy in Brussels, Belgium, in 1947 after her friend Tony dies in a hotel. Hare describes Brock as "an ingenuous figure, not yet thirty, with a small moustache and a natural energy he finds hard to contain in the proper manner." Brock becomes Susan's husband after taking her out of a mental hospital somewhere between December, 1952, and October, 1956. He does not seem bothered by dishonesty when it suits his purpose or coincides with his beliefs. He lies for Susan so that Tony Radley's wife does not find out that her husband was traveling with another woman. Later, Brock seems unruffled by the fact that Darwin was lied to about the Suez Canal episode. Brock is described by his superior, Sir Andrew Charleson, as an unexemplory employee; however, his patience with Susan and her various mental challenges throughout the years suggests a certain level of integrity. In the later years of *Plenty's* chronology, Brock has lost his career in the foreign service and is working in the insurance industry. He is introduced in the first scene (what is, chronologically, his last scene in the play's non-linear sequence of events), naked, drank, drugged, and unconscious, with Ms wife preparing to leave him.

Sir Andrew Ckarleson

Charleson is the Chief Clerk in charge of personnel matters for the Foreign Service. Susan discusses Brock's career with him following the couple's return from Iran. Charleson can be read as a condescending character in that he treats his assistant with little respect. Hare characterizes Charleson as a man in his early fifties with "far more edge" than Darwin. Perhaps by edge, Hare means to say that Charleson is direct and to

the point. He tells Susan quite frankly that her husband has been tested and although he has risen beyond one challenge, he is honestly a rather average man in terms of his performance in the Foreign Service.

Sir Leonard Darwin

Darwin serves as a superior to Brock in the Foreign Service. He is a tactful and patriotic diplomat. He has faith in the reconstruction of Europe following World War II and does not take Europe's greatness for granted. He is an upstanding man who believes in his country until he is deceived about England's role in the Suez Canal incident. This deception provokes his resignation from the Foreign Service.

Darwin takes a moral stand that counters what would have been the appropriate diplomatic reaction, which is to support his country without question—despite his feelings of betrayal. As a result of his resignation—and, overall, his comittment to the truth regardless of decorum and expectations— Darwin is shunned by society, as evidenced by the small turnout at his funeral While Susan claims to be motivated by truth, it is Darwin who represents genuine honesty in Hare's play.

Dorcas Frey

She is Alice's seventeen-year-old history student from Kensington Academy, where Alice begins to teach during the play. Dorcas attends Sir Leonard Darwin's funeral as Alice's guest. Having had sex with one of Alice's friends in an effort to acquire drugs, Dorcas becomes pregnant. After Darwin's funeral, Dorcas asks to borrow money from Susan in order to get an abortion, although she claims to need the money for a hand operation.

Lazar

Lazar is the man Susan accidentally meets while she waits for a shipment of guns and explosives during the war one evening. He is an agent for England and Lazar is only his code name (his real name is never revealed). Susan often wonders about Lazar in the years following the war. He tracks her down in England nineteen years after their first meeting in France. They have sex *m* a cheap hotel, and he tries to tell Susan about his life after the war. He feels that he has sold out in some fashion because he works in the corporate world and has a wife and a home in suburbia. Despite wanting to reveal something of his life following the war, Lazar ultimately hides his true identity from Susan He leaves her, stoned on marijuana, without telling her his real name (he tells her the name she has always known: Lazar). Lazar's absence throughout most of the play as well as his shadowed identity code him as a mystery man. In a way, he represents all that has been elusive in Susan's life; it is the enigma that surrounds him—and the possibility that he possesses that which would make her life whole—that maintains Susan's interest for so many years.

Mick

Mick is a friend of Alice's who Susan approaches to father her child. He is a friendly younger man who still lives with his mother. He is from a lower class than Susan and thus does not spend time in the same social circles as she and Brock. Mick agrees to father the child and the two spend eighteen months trying; however, they are never successful. Mick winds up feeling quite horrible and used by the experience. He would like to continue to be involved with Susan yet the two agree not to see each other any longer. Mick later confronts Susan despite their agreement; however, she wants nothing to do with him and shoots her gun above his head. Later, Susan tells Lazar that Brock paid Mick to appease him after the incident.

Alice Park

Alice is Susan's self-proclaimed Bohemian friend. Susan meets Alice in 1947 and stays in touch with her until the play's end in 1962. Alice leads a rather carefree existence, sleeping with married men, doing drugs, working inconsistently, and crashing at Susan's home on occasion. Alice encourages Susan to break free from the things that Susan believes restrain her: Brock and her job. Alice seems to enjoy the drama that such action would present Alice seemingly dislikes England as well as its social expectations. Throughout the course of the play she resists these expectations and helps those whose lives run counter to the country's dominant cultural expectations—as evidenced by her plans to use Susan and Brock's home as a kind of halfway house for expecting unwed mothers.

Susan Traherne

Susan Traherne is the rather complicated protagonist of the play. She is both volatile and passionate, as exemplified by her unpredictable outbursts and her lingering feelings for Lazar. Susan suffers from mental instability that manifests itself in her brutal and unabashed honesty. She serves in World War II as a courier for the English in France, and after the war she is disillusioned, constantly confronting the boredom and inanity of her subsequent jobs. She has trouble adjusting to postwar England and seems lost in her admiration of the past; through her memory and the mundane quality of her present life, her years with British intelligence have acheived an idealized (an unrealistic) perfection. She thinks longingly of the war and her love affair with Lazar.

Susan finds herself alone at the end of the play. She goes from serving a country in a war on foreign soil to being ostracized by that country by the end of the play's chronology. In the beginning, Susan willingly accepts this outsider status. In the end, her status as someone who is alienated can be seen as self-inflicted or as a punishment that others (perhaps unjustly) impose upon her (like other points in the play, Hare leaves this issue ambiguous). Although Susan is characterized as mentally unstable, she claims her actions are motivated by a desire for change and truth—bolstered by her willingness to say that which others will not. Despite her declarations of allegiance to the

truth, Susan comes to represent something else entirely: unfulfilled hopes and ambitions. Like her native country, Susan reaches her apex in the victory of World War II; in subsequent years she and England will both fail to sustain their dreams of empire and influence

Themes

Duty and Responsibility

Much of the themes of duty and responsibility in *Plenty* revolve around social expectations and patriotic obligations. Susan fulfills her patriotic duty to England by serving in the resistance efforts during the war. Likewise, Brock, Darwin, Begley, Charleson, and M. Aung's service in diplomatic positions reflects their patriotic responsibility to represent their countries. Both Mick and Brock attempt to meet the traditional social responsibilities of men in that Mick tries to father a child with Susan and become involved with her while Brock later cares for Susan financially and emotionally as her husband. Interestingly, many of the characters in this play can be described as failures in these respects.

Although Susan feels that she is helping France curtail Germany's encroachment during the war, the Frenchman that she and Lazar encounter in the first scene tells them that the English are not welcome in France. From the Frenchman's perception, Susan and Lazar are fulfilling duties that are not necessarily required of them. After the war Susan fails to adhere to the unspoken civil responsibility of following social protocol. Instead of being quiet and acquiescent (as women were expected to do), Susan is often verbose and brash. Susan and Alice (who adheres to social mores even less than Susan) seem almost unpatriotic in their dislike for their nation, its policies and conventions. Susan also refuses to let Mick assume the responsibilities that being a lover, father, or even a friend would entail—despite Ms apparent willingness to be all of the these things to her.

Darwin relinquishes his duties in the foreign service in order to be honest with himself and others about what he perceives really happened over the Suez Canal. By abandoning the socially acceptable diplomatic role, Darwin refuses to take responsibility for the lies of his country. Ironically his honesty codes him as unpatriotic in that he does not unconditionally support England. For different reasons Brock fails to meet his professional responsibilities in the eyes of the foreign service. He does not advance through the ranks because he fails to excel in his

duties. At the play's conclusion, he is working in the insurance industry. Ironically insurance protects people when and if they are unable to care for themselves. Thus it seems that while on the surface this play focuses on the ways in which the characters meet their duties and responsibilities, it also turns this notion upside down by exposing the ways in which they fail themselves and others as well.

Sanity vs. Insanity

Another central theme of *Plenty* revolves around the question of Susan's state of mind. Towards the end of the play Susan admits to Lazar that she has "not always been well"; however, just after this admission she also tells him that her clarity of mind is something

that she controls. This scene suggests that, as Susan says, she simply "likes to lose control" at times. While "losing control" may have been an asset during her daring wartime work, it is a less desirable trait in England's staid postwar society.

In an earlier scene Brock denies that Susan is mad by suggesting that she simply "feels strongly." After Darwin's pressing however, Brock admits that Susan does have a history of mental illness. Brock actually admitted Susan to a mental institution after the shooting incident with Mick. Despite the apparent proof that Susan is mentally disturbed, the scenes which betray this instability are also marked by Susan's willingness to speak what she believes to be true. Some critics have suggested that, with the character of Susan, Hare intertwines truth and madness. As far as his protagonist is concerned, the truth and insanity are mutually dependent traits; her mental instability fuels her need to expose the truth.

Truth and Lies

The question of honesty permeates this play and most of its characters. Susan exemplifies someone who is willing to speak her mind despite the fact that what she says may be inappropriate and offensive. Despite her devotion to the truth, Susan is not above deception. In fact, her work hi France was based on duplicity. Likewise, she does not intercede with the truth regarding the money she loans to Dorcas Frey. Alice tells Brock that the funds are for a hand operation while Susan knows—but does not betray—the truth: that Dorcas needs the money for an abortion.

Brock is another character who lies throughout the play. He lies to Tony Radley's widow about Tony traveling alone at the time of his death— although this he does serve to protect both Radley's reputation and his widow's feelings. Later, Brock seems to not understand Darwin's consternation regarding the lies that surround England's role in the Suez Canal incident. Although the play does not explicitly incriminate M. Aung as a liar, his exaggerated deference seems insincere. His wife, though perhaps not a liar, does convey false information when she tells the dinner guests that Ingmar Bergman is Norwegian when in fact he is Swedish. Darwin, who is associated with truth throughout the play, corrects this false information. Later Darwin resigns because he is unable to live with the he that continued diplomatic service might require. He feels betrayed and takes the higher moral ground. Darwin's morality is apparently respected by few of his peers, as evidenced by the small turnout at his funeral.

Hare seems to be criticizing the social practice of rewarding those who advance by any means necessary. While the characters who manipulate the truth are often successful, they are hardly respectable people. Although Susan is, for the most part, devoted to truth, her motivation is in part driven by bitterness over the lost hopes and dreams of her adventurous youth. Her obsession with exposing the truth also reveals her mental problems and may eventually lead her to imprisonment in an institution. Darwin, perhaps the most honest character in the play, is rewarded for his integrity with vilification. It's interesting to note that he shares the surname of Charles Darwin (author of the ground breaking *Origin of the Species),* the British naturalist known for advancing

the theory of evolution. Darwin the scientist was frequently attacked for challenging preconceived notions regarding man's origins.

Style

Setting

Plenty takes place in the European countries of England, France, and Belgium. The twelve scenes occur in seven different cities or towns during eight different years ranging from November of 1943 up through June of 1962. The setting of this play is significant because it is far from unified. Not only does the action skip from location to location, but it also travels back and forth through close to nineteen years as well Instead of highlighting the ways in which many things change over time, the skipping through the years exposes what remains constant in the lives of the characters, namely Susan's dissatisfaction.

The setting for Scene 1 and Scene 10 is particularly significant because it takes place on Easter. Dunng these scenes, Susan prepares to and eventually does leave Brock. Because Easter symbolically recalls Jesus Christ's resurrection, Susan's leaving can perhaps be read as a rebirth of sorts. Hare concludes the play with an almost dream-Eke scene in which a radiant, young Susan celebrates the Resistance's victory in France. The audience's last impression of her is as a confident, optimistic young woman. Yet this scene evokes bittersweet emotions with the knowledge that Susan's life will never again be this rich or fulfilling.

Allusion

Hare employs several political allusions within his play. An allusion is a reference to a person, place, or event with which the reader/viewer is supposed to be familiar (likewise, a literary allusion makes reference to a written work with which familiarity is assumed). An example of a more overt allusion occurs in Scene 7 when Susan brings up the Suez Canal. Critics such as Ted Whitehead, who wrote for the *Spectator* in 1978, somewhat sarcastically criticized Hare because such allusions "may mean more to those for whom Suez still rings a bell." Whether one is familiar with the event or not, its inclusion in the text should prompt an investigation about the event, for knowing the history behind the canal will only further one's level of understanding regarding Hare's intent. The playwright's allusions highlight his refusal to spoon-feed his audiences with a neatly packaged message.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is one of the more central literary devices Hare employs in *Plenty.* He intended ambiguity. He gives examples of this intention in his foreword to *Plenty.* Hare says of Susan, "in Scene Four you may feel that the way she gets rid of her boyfriend is stylish, and almost exemplary in its lack of hurtfulness; or you may feel it is crude and dishonest." By not clearly defining a character's actions or motivations, Hare provokes thought in his readers and viewers. He intends to show that there are often many ways

of perceiving a situation or person. Some may see Susan as heroic while others may find her crazy and unpredictable. The manner in which Hare portrays her makes it possible to view the character in both of these lights.

Unconventional

Convention in literature pertains to certain expected approaches and traditions associated with particular genres. Hare breaks with traditional approaches to drama and thus his work can be considered unconventional. In particular, *Plenty's* plot is considered a departure from standard dramatic narrative. Hare's plot does not follow a linear development that progresses from a beginning through a middle to an end. Instead, the plot is broken up and begins at the end. Scene 2 is really the first of the chronology and Scene 12 is the second in the chronology. Although Scene 3 through Scene 11 follow in a linear fashion, they are separated by many years. In addition the setting for these scenes span the globe, taking place in different countries and cities throughout Europe. Rather than adhering to the unities of theater (place, time, and action as defined by Aristotle's *Poetics),* Hare jumbles the events of Susan's life to illustrate his themes; while time does not unfold in a typical fashion, the play's structure allows the playwright to build a "linear" concept of thematic unity.

Plenty is also considered unconventional in its liberal use of cinematic techniques such as flashbacks, quick scene changes that approximate film editing styles, and concise dialogue. While the play earned its share of criticism for appropriating such methods (many theater critics looked down on film as a bastardization of traditional drama), it also made *Plenty* appealing to a generation of theater goers who had become familiar with cinematic vocabulary.

Symbolism

One of the most blatant symbols in *Plenty* is Susan's gun. According to Joan Fitzpatrick Dean in *David Hare,* Susan's gun symbolizes her "destructive powers that are intended to exact respect and submission." Often guns suggest a certain phallic presence in literature. Read in this way, Susan's gun could also be understood to symbolize the ways in which she controls, manipulates, and destroys the men in her life.

Hare also employs symbolism by linking Darwin (through the character's name) to noted scientist Charles Darwin, who, like the diplomat, sought to spread the truth despite harsh criticism. On a larger scale, the character of Susan can be seen to symbolize the unfulfilled promise of England in the postwar era. Like Susan at the end of World War H, the British empire is strong and confident, believing that it has the power to change the world for the better. Susan's disillusionment and growing unhap-piness mirror the dissolution of the British empire and the country's increasing hardships with unemployment and domestic unrest.

Historical Context

England in 1978

England is one of the countries that comprise the United Kingdom along with Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In 1978, the year of *Plenty's* debut, Prime Minister James Callaghan and Queen Elizabeth U presided over the United Kingdom, whose population at the time was approximately 55,780,000 people.

British Arts and Literature in the 1970s

According to Arthur Marwick in *British Society since 1945,* "British art merged anonymously into the major international trends" and thus did not necessarily advance a "distinctively national or personal genius." Marwick identified "super realism" as one of the international trends with which British art blended. He included political works that emphasize feminism and homosexuality in this group. For dramatists, poets, and musicians, he noted that "innovation tended to be at the unspectacular." Despite such derogatory comments, Marwick did— contrarily—suggest that in the 1970s "the National Theatre at last entered into its magnificent new architectural complex and thereafter continued to present a range of plays which could by no stretch of the words be deemed conservative or unimaginative."

Also during this period, novelists such as Angela Carter and Fay Weldon advanced feminist concerns while playwrights such as Hare addressed issues that directly affected women in postwar society. Marwick called the rise of women novelists and feminism as a literary theme "the most significant development in the indigenous novel "for the 1970s.

Economy

By the close of 1978, the British economy had not enjoyed a better year since 1973. Most of the leading indicators were up, including total output, export volume, spending power, earnings, and retail sales. The government aided this trend by reducing taxes during the summer of 1978. As a result of a strong pound (the basic unit of currency in England), the country experienced less expensive imports. In addition inflation was brought to a celebrated low of 7.4% in June of 1978.

Although 1978 signaled improvement in many areas, the mid- to late-1970s were a harkemng back to the Depression of the 1930s according to Marwick in *British Society since 1945.* The author stated that this period was marked by "a general sense of a worsening economy and declining living standards ... and the break up of the optimistic consensus which had carried Britain through the difficult postwar years into the affluence of the sixties."

Politics

According to *Encyclopedia Britanmca 's Book of the Year* for 1979, one of the principal successes of 1978 was Prime Minister Callaghan's ability to run the nation despite" a hung Parliament, a divided Labour Party, and Trades Union Congress opposition to his principle policies." Ironically, in 1978, opinion polls rated Margaret Thatcher less popular than James Callaghan. This suggests that the Labour Party enjoyed a higher approval rating than Thatcher's Conservative Party despite the fact that Thatcher assumed the Prime Ministership in 1979.

Foreign Relations

Callaghan's visit to India marked a major foreign relations event in 1978. Prior to this visit, a British Prime Minister had not visited India since 1971. The general concerns for the year involved increasing international trade and decreasing Soviet influence in Cuba and Africa. Britain's colonies continue to agitate for independence. Colonial Prime Minister Ian Smith signed an agreement that allowed the African nation of Zimbabwe's black majority to assume sovereignty by year's end.

Class

During the 1970s, Britain's society continued to confirm the endurance of its class-conscious system. The decade, however, was also a time of class mobility. Marwick noted that "Margaret Thatcher herself is a symbol of the educational opportunity and upward mobility offered by the British System." Marwick referred to the Prime Minister's "lower-middle-class" beginnings in contrast to her future distinction as the British head of state as an example of the possibility of social mobility afforded to British citizens during this era.

Critical Overview

Plenty has most certainly not gone without its share of unfavorable criticism despite the fact that it is one of Hare's best-known plays. Prior to *Plenty's* debut at the Lyttelton Theatre, Hare's plays had not been performed at Britain's National Theatre and following some of the rather scathing reviews from his critical contemporaries it may seem shocking that Hare has risen to such artistic acclaim—despite the mixed critical reaction his plays have received, he has continued to be popular with audiences.

It is perhaps Hare's often shocking and pointed commentary about England that elicited such a response from his nation's critics. After the release of the film adaptation in 1985, Gavin Millar wrote in *Sight and Sound, '* 'no one with any serious hopes for contemporary British writing can ignore him, yet what the devil is the chap saying about us" Ted Whitehead, writing for the *Spectator* soon after *Plenty's* first performance in April of 1978, had answered this question years earlier by detailing Hare's work as "a cry of disgust with Britain— with the wet, the cold, the flu, the flood, the loveless English—- and with the horror of sexual repression, the futility of sexual freedom, the corruption of wealth, the lie of good behavior, the decay of belief, the deceit of advertising, the bureaucracy and the indignity of death."

Whitehead touched on the elements within the play which may have offended Britain's critics. He further noted that the play was somewhat confusing because of the inclusion of "some sketchy minor characters" such as Dorcas Frey and the Aungs. Then* inclusion, along with the "hurtling forward, or backward and forward, gives the feeling of hectic development that never quite becomes organic growth" according to the critic. Whitehead was not alone in his confusion about *Plenty.* Bernard Levin wrote in the *Sunday Times* in April, 1978, "what does the author want us to think, to feel? What is he saying? What does he believe about his characters and their predicament? There is no telling, and it is no use searching the title for clues, either, for it has less discernible connection with the contents than in any play since *Twelfth Night."*

Of the film version, George Perry echoed Levin's dismay in his November, 1985, article for the *Sunday Times.* He noted that ' *'Plenty,* albeit well dressed, entertaining, and cleverly written, is ultimately so shallow it might as well have been called Empty." While there seemed to be a consensus of confusion surrounding *Plenty,* which many critics viewed as the playwright's fault, one critic suggested that perhaps the viewers of Hare's work were themselves responsible for coming up empty. Writing for *London Magazine,* Colin Ludlow commented that the critical conclusion "that *[Plenty]* lacks substance and has nothing to say" results from "pure laziness" on the part of the critics. Further, Ludlow noted that his peers' inability to understand the play also highlights the way in which "Hare refuses to prescribe cures for the problems he highlights."

In a two-page "Note on Performance" published with *Plenty,* Hare confirms his intent to not answer the questions he poses. He wrote, "ambiguity is central to the idea of the play. The audience is asked to make its own mind up about each of the actions. In the act of judging, the audience learns something about its own values." Hare's work

continued to frustrate, disappoint, and challenge critics both in England and in the United States, where he produced the play in 1982 prior to making the film version; however in general, *Plenty* was received much better abroad than at home.

In his introduction to his work *The History Plays,* which includes *Plenty,* Hare partially attributes this relative acceptance to the fact that Ameri-. cans were "not afraid to look English society in the eye, to see Suez as criminal and the Foreign Office as absurd. They also seemed less frightened of a strong woman." Despite the criticism Hare has received about the political content of his work, he has often been praised for his wit even by his most skeptical critics. In the same *Spectator* article of 1978, Whitehead applauded the playwright's "glacially witty dialogue."

Much to Hare's credit, he has been congratulated not only for his mastery of his craft but for his effect on audiences as well. After noting the intentional ambiguity *of Plenty,* Ludlow made the comment that "the power of his [Hare's] work is to provoke thoughts and disturb complacency." He follows this with the appraisal that "certainly the study of suffering and waste in *Plenty* does no less than that." While critics may have initially chafed at Hare's forthright commentary in *Plenty,* time has shown the play to be a significant contribution to both British and world drama. As Joan Fitzpatrick Dean noted in *David Hare, "Plenty* deserves to be Hare's best-known work, not only because it is among his finest plays but because it epitomizes his themes and character types. Like many of his works of the 1970s, *Plenty* deals with specifically British experiences and personalities."

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Kellett is a professional writer with a specialty in drama. The following essay explores the theme of ambiguity in David Hare's Plenty.

The extent to which readers are able to understand or discern an author's intended meaning is often a topic of literary debate. Some authors refuse to discuss the meaning of their works and thus it is not possible to know for certain whether critical interpretations of their writings are accurate. Doris Sommer's article "Resisting the Heat: Mench, Morrison, and Incompetent Readers" in *Cultures of United States Imperialism,* expanded this debate even further. Sommer argued that readers may not necessarily be capable of accurately interpreting a work's meaning because "some books resist the competent reader."

Sommer noted that writers like Guatemala's Rigoberta Mench and the United States's Toni Morrison may intentionally prevent readers from pinning down an author's meaning. Sommer's article raises the point that authors go to varying lengths to either help or hinder interpretation of their work. In addition, she noted a critical distinction between ambiguity and what she calls resistance. She stated that "ambiguity, unlike the resistance that interests me here, has been for some time a consecrated and flattering theme for professional readers. It blunts interpretive efforts and therefore invites more labor."

David Hare's works combine resistance and ambiguity. In the introduction to *The Early Plays: Slag, Great Exhibition, Teeth* V *Smiles,* Hare states, "as you can't control people's reactions to your plays, your duty is also not to reduce people's reactions, not to give them easy handles with which they can pigeon-hole you, and come to comfortable terms with what you are saying " In the "Note on Performance" that precedes *Plenty,* Hare goes further. He says of *Plenty,* ' T planned a play in twelve scenes, in which there would be twelve dramatic actions. Each of these actions is intended to be ambiguous, and it is up to the audience to decide what they feel about each event."

Taken as a whole, Hare's *Plenty* may seem rather overwhelming—in fact it has confounded many critics over the years. Taken piece by piece, however, the play may be more readily accessible. In the "Note on Performance," Hare states that he intends for his audiences, or presumably his readers, to judge his characters and plots in order to arrive at conclusions about the work as a whole. One impediment to judging quickly, however, is the presence of ambiguity in Hare's writing. Thus prior to judging, one must explore the nature of *Plenty's* ambiguities in further detail.

One of the greatest obscurities in *Plenty* surrounds the characterization of Susan Traheme. Should she be detested, admired, or pitied? Is she selfish, inspired, or crazy? Can she be detested, admired, and pitied because she is selfish, inspired, and crazy? These questions are not easily answered; however, they seem to be the very judgments that Hares insists his readers make. In *David Hare,* Joan Fitzpatrick Dean remarked that

"there is a fundamental ambiguity in Hare's presentation of Susan. On the one hand she is frustrated, trapped, and unfulfilled; on the other, she is selfish, insatiable, and unreasonable."

Scene 7 is the pinnacle scene of Susan's frustration with the polite inanity of the British diplomatic world. Her barbs towards Darwin, who to that point had epitomized the acquiescence and silence Susan detests about diplomacy, reflect her deep dissatisfaction with Britain's social mores. In a heated moment she declares, "I would stop, I would stop, I would stop ... talking if I ever heard anyone else say anything worth ... stopping talking for." But does Susan's outburst reflect a warranted frustration or simply the ranting of a self-centered unstable idealist who wishes to control the present and who cannot let go of the past? Susan's dealings with Mick suggest the latter.

In asking Mick to father a child for her, Susan exposes an intolerance for allowing other people into her private world. She is absorbed in her own wishes and would be more than happy to "do the whole damn thing" alone. After Mick and Susan's attempts fail, she reveals that she does not care for Mick's feelings. The Susan presented in Scene 6 is cold, calculated, and self-absorbed. She does not demonstrate compassion for Mick, who feels used, but rather she is preoccupied with the work she must do on her newest ad campaign. In the end, Mick concludes that "she is actually mad," yet is she not just frustrated by his love for her?

Hare suggests that the answers to these questions betray the values of the one who judges, dius what does it imply to say that Susan is frustrated or Susan is a raving lunatic or Susan is selfish? Better yet, what does Hare evoke by wanting his readers to categorize Susan as one thing or another? To see Susan as a frustrated and trapped woman places the reader squarely within a camp that openly criticizes Bntish culture; however, labeling her as crazy may indeed do the same. Susan's madness may account for the lack of perfect British decorum in her behavior, yet it does not necessarily diminish the impact of what she says

Whether she is frustrated or crazy, Susan's honesty still reveals social criticism. The reader who is willing to label her as frustrated shows his or her willingness to be overtly critical, while the reader who prefers to call her crazy can be shielded from implicating him/herself in such criticism. In the end then, the ambiguity surrounding Susan Traherne ferrets out those folks who value honesty above decorum or those who value diplomacy above forthrighmess.

Hare weaves ambiguity throughout *Plenty* not only through his characterization of Susan but within each scene as well. As he clearly states in his "Note on Performance," he intended each action to be ambiguous. One of the ambiguities raised in Scene 2 concerns the British presence in France. Angry about losing the guns and explosives from an armed Lazar, the Frenchman declares, "Nobody ask you. Nobody ask you to come." In French he adds, "you are not welcome here " The implicit "you" of the Frenchman's statement is not simply Susan and Lazar but the British in general.

In this scene Hare suggests that despite their allegiance in resistance to Germany, England and France were perhaps not as united as one might think. What then are the rales of engagement by which Susan and Lazar must abide when France, a supposed ally, becomes adversarial? She says, "they [the Gaullists] just expect the English to die. They sit and watch us spitting blood in the streets." In a frightened state of dismay Susan questions, "what's the point of following the rules?" Susan's questioning contrasts sharply with the comment she makes earlier in the scene that, "it really is best if you always obey the rules." Scene 2 thus embodies two contradictions that leave the audience or reader somewhat mystified: allies stand in opposition to one another and rules are both to be followed and not to be followed.

Although Scene 2 does not include Alice, the themes it raises have metaphorical implications on Susan's relationship with her. In that Alice and Susan share a distaste for England, she and Susan seem alike. In *David Hare,* Dean suggested that although Alice and Susan share such distaste, "the contrast between them is at least as strong as their shared disdain for convention." Dean noted that Susan "admires Alice's freedom and independence," but she does not achieve the same in her own life. In Scene 6 Alice prompts Susan to leave her job and Brock, yet Susan convinces herself not to do either. Susan does not leave Brock for another ten years and continues to torment herself with unfulfilling occupational choices. As she sees it, she chooses instead to continue "living in hell."

Susan and Alice's relationship symbolizes the notion that within similarity, differences may exist. Alice most definitely does not believe that one must always obey the rules. Her sexually active Bohemian lifestyle flies in the face of such social conventions. Susan's rejection of the rules manifests itself only sporadically and thus she can ironically be seen as someone who in part obeys the social mores of her time. The action advanced in Scene 2 involves Lazar and Susan in 1944 in France, yet the ambiguities it evokes permeate the play throughout its entirety.

Because ambiguity plays such an integral role in Hare's work, one should not be surprised that his title also reflects this basic organizing principle. The title calls to mind Susan's postwar optimism In the final scene, which chronologically precedes the majority of the other scenes in the play, Susan declares "there will be days and days and days like this." Susan's perception of what the day is like differs greatly from that of the Frenchman who seems downtrodden and pessimistic about the future and his own reality. Thus, the days that follow or—in the jumbled chronology of the play—have passed, can either be seen as Susan perceives them or as the Frenchman perceives them.

The scene's placement at the end of the play also has important significance. First, it calls attention to the fact that the days that follow it chronologically do not meet Susan's expectations; however, if one reads the final scene as a 1962 dream sequence induced by Susan's drug use, her words may express a valid hope for her future. The title, like this final scene, embodies two possible perceptions of the past and the future: one of plenty and one of lack. Again, Hare leaves this judgment for his readers and audiences to make. The irony afforded by the more pessimistic reading may seem a bit more

appealing, however, the two readings play into Hare's use of ambiguity. Despite the reading that each viewer of *Plenty* may choose, the inclusion of options makes Hare's play an exercise in decision-making.

As Colin Ludlow noted in an article for the *London Magazine,* "the power of his [Hare's] work is to provoke thought and to disturb complacency." At the very least, Hare stirs his audience into debate. For this reason, I would argue that the title of "Empty" that George Perry suggested in his review of the play for the *Sunday Times* lacks the subtlety required of this wonderfully ambiguous play.

Source: D. L. Kelletl, for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

Cardullo examines the use of staging, particularly the elements of light and sound, as they pertain to the the character of Susan in Hare's work.

In Scenes 2 through 11 of David Hare's *Plenty* (1978), we hear sounds from the dark before the lights come up on the action. Those sounds are of a wireless (Scene 2); a small string orchestra (Scene 3); a string quartet (Scene 4); a brass band (Scene 5); Charlie Parker's saxophone (Scene 6); the music of the English composer Elgar (Scene 7); the voice of a priest (Scene 8): a radio interview (Scene 9);' "some stately orchestral chords: melodic, solemn" (Scene 10); Elgar's music again (Scene 11). The lights come straight up on the action, without any sounds coming first from the dark, in Scene 1. In Scene 12, music is playing as "the room [of Scene 11] scatters [and] we see a French hillside in high summer. The stage picture forms piece by piece. Green, yellow, brown. Trees. The fields stretch away. A high sun. A brilliant August day."

Plenty, in the words of Robert Brustein, traces Ihe career of a spirited Englishwoman from her youth as a courier [1943], aiding the French resistance against the Nazis, to her collapse, some fifteen years later [1956], into peacetime disillusionment—paralyzed by anomie, riddled wilh depression, rotting with despair and psychic rust. Hare's heroine, Susan Traherne, represents a particular example of a general condition, the personification of a hopeful, idealistic generation disaffected by a nation in moral collapse. It is Hare's conviction that World War FI represented England's last heroic moment, after which it experienced a series of demoralizing deceptions and compromises, tied to the loss of empire. Ironically, this was a time of relative affluence, an era of peace and *p\enly [New Republic,* November 29, 1982]

The play begins in 1962 as Susan is about to leave her husband, Raymond Brock, whom she later says she married only because he had once been kind to her when she was in trouble (she had shot a man in a quarrel). The play begins, that is, with Susan's disillusionment and despair. We see that disillusionment and despair clearly from the start; there is no anticipatory moment of darkness and sound before Scene 1. There is such an anticipatory moment before Scene 2, and this scene itself is played in only "a small amount of light." Scene 2 is a flashback to Susan's days as a teenaged courier for the Resistance—a time of excitement, danger, mystery, and promise for her There—we get not only "from the dark the sound of the wireless," but a whole scene played in semi-darkness: darkness is a metaphor, not for death, but for life lived at its highest pitch. Scene 11 is a flash forward to England in 1962, after Susan has left Brock and has been tracked down by Lazar, the parachutist whom she aided in Scene 2 and whom she hasn't seen since the war. Susan and Lazar are spending the night in a Blackpool hotel in a failed attempt to recapture the exhilaration and sense of purpose of 1943. The scene is played in semi-darkness, an ironic reproduction of the lighting of Scene 2.

Scenes 3 through 10 of *Plenty* chronicle Susan's life from 1947 to 1962. She meets Brock after the death in 1947 of Tony, a Resistance worker with whom she was carrying on a casual affair and whose sudden death of a heart attack can be seen as a mercy

not afforded those who had to live through England's decline after World War H She has an unhappy career as an advertising copywriter, where success is "simply a question of pitching my intelligence low enough"; she runs around with a bohe-mian crowd. Susan attempts to have a child by Mick, a man she barely knows: she wants a child, but not a husband; she likes sex, but she'd rather not know her sex partner very well, if at all. She marries Brock, whom she does not love. She shows signs of a mental imbalance that will never leave her.

Like Scene 2, Scenes 3 through 10 open with an anticipatory moment of darkness and sound; unlike Scene 2, these scenes present an increasingly sad reality exposed by light. Through light and sound, Hare repeats the outline of Susan's experience up to her leaving Brock eight times: the anticipation— the promise of darkness and sound—then the deflation—the disappointment of light and human bodies. Even though the sounds from the dark are usually meant to underline the mood of the scene to come (for instance, the music of a brass band before Susan's brassy request, made at a festival and fireworks site, that Mick father her child), still they have, occurring *before* not during the scene, an existence independent of it, an existence in darkness as pure, tantalizing sound. Scene 12, set in 1944 in newly liberated France, opens in light: even as we saw clearly Susan's disillusionment and despair in Scene 1, we see the past clearly now. We see it without illusions, with the knowledge about Susan and England that the play has given us, knowledge that Susan herself, for all her erratic behavior, achieved. The time is immediately after the liberation, and already the boredom and sluggishness of "peace and plenty" are setting in under a brilliant sun. Thus the "unnaturally gloomy" farmer whom Susan encounters speaks with "extreme disgust" of the ugly stretchmarks he sees on his wife's legs in bed, as if darkness with its attendant invitation or allure has completely deserted them, just as it will desert Susan.

Source: Bert Cardullo, "Hare's *Plenty"* in the *Explwator,* Volume 43, no. 2, Winter, 1985, pp 62-63.

Critical Essay #3

Looking at two film versions of Hare's work, critic Haskell praises the author for his creation of strong female leads. She primarily focuses on the film adaptation of Plenty *starring Meryl Streep as Susan Traherne.*

First, Kate Nelligan, beautiful and sardonic as the larger-than-life and eternally dissatisfied heroine of David Hare's play *Plenty* (produced at New York City's Public Theater and transferred to Broadway several seasons ago). Then, Vanessa Redgrave, all natural radiance as a Yorkshire schoolteacher in *Wetherby,* Hare's first venture as filmmaker. And now, in the movie *Plenty,* Meryl Streep giving brilliantly muted and quite different shadings to the character of Susan Traherne. Together, they constitute a three-woman/one-man renaissance of great women's roles.

A male critic I know was so startled at the spectacle of these powerhouse heroines that he began looking for signs of misogyny in Hare True, Jean Travers (Redgrave) sends her lover to his death ... in a sense. And Susan Traherne is a man-eating tigress (though where Nelligan spit her men out for breakfast, Streep swallows them sadly). But there's more to it than that. All these women are too large to be contained by a label like misogyny—or veneration, for that matter.

In *Wetherby,* Travers is plagued by memories of the past, in particular the night her young fiance went off to war ... and died before he could get there. As her story unfolds in flashbacks (with Redgrave's daughter Joely Richardson playing Jean Travers as a young girl), we realize that she had only to say the word to keep her lover at home. That she didn't was partly, one suspects, because she refused to be responsible for another person's life decision; but more important, she had a duty to herself that marriage would have compromised. In the midst of his deliberately, tantahzrngly cryptic narrative, Hare makes it quite clear that the kind of marriage she and her provincial young man were about to make would have ended forever her passionate desire for an education.

An abiding guilt mingled with the tremendous satisfactions of being a really good teacher—that's the life that Redgrave's glowingly attractive middle-aged "spinster" is content to live. Until the disruptive intrusion of a strange young man (Tim McInnerny) who kills himself in her presence, and an equally strange young woman (Suzanna Hamilton) who later appears on the schoolteacher's doorstep, Travers is as richly in tune with herself as she is with the old farmhouse that becomes the stage for unseemly melodrama.

Through the device of a psychological mystery that is never resolved, Hare gives us a richly atmospheric and slyly satirical study of a milieu, and the manners—ultra-British yet casually "country"— that maintain a smooth facade even as the underpinnings are about to crack.

For all its modernist, ellipses, *Wetherby* is a remarkably physical film, both in the sense of place it evokes, and the sensuality of the characters. The attraction between

Redgrave and a stumblingly shrewd detective (Stuart Wilson), for example, provides one of the more erotically charged love scenes in recent cinema.

Susan Traherne, the heroine of *Plenty,* Hare's wittily scathing chronicle of postwar England, is also a woman nagged and imprisoned by the past, but in this case the past represents perfection. In France, during a night of lovemaking with a fellow Resistance worker, love and ideals came together. From that moment, life became a disillusioning descent..

In both play and film Traherne is a feverish idealist who, by her own admission, wants to change the world without knowing how. Her life is one long and increasingly reckless diatribe against what she considers the complacency of an England grown fat and conservative with postwar profits. But she is more (and less) than the scourge of the bourgeoisie. Sardonic and strong-minded, she rips apart the surface of life and shreds human beings as she does so. She works at jobs she despises; she takes a lower-class lover in order to get herself an illegitimate, and unconventional, child; she marries, without passion, a man in the diplomatic corps to whom she feels culturally superior. Finally, unable to find a niche or an outlet—and perhaps unable to face the wreckage of her life—she goes mad. Is she, finally, a lonely beacon of emancipation or an angel of destruction? More than a little of both, I should say.

Like Ibsen's Hedda Gabler before her, like Frances Farmer in the recent dramas of her life, she seems to lay claim to a feminist alibi: that of die woman too large and energetic for the options that society gives her. Yet, like Hedda, like Farmer, there is an arrogant, narcissistic fury that drives her to destroy rather than to nurture or create. She is smarter than everyone around her—yet she surrounds herself with people to whom she can condescend. Having done noble work in the Resistance, she dismisses an entire nation with the words, "People back in England seem a little childish."

"Don't you think," another character says to her, "you wear your suffering a little heavily?"

In adapting his own play, David Hare has barely changed a word, yet the whole feeling of the film is different. (The film is directed by Australian Fred Schepisi, who also directed the haunting "The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith" about a scorned half-breed aborigine turned vengeful murderer of whites.) One of the beauties of the film version is that it takes the destructive side of Traherne's idealism into account without making us hate her. On the contrary, thanks to a more balanced cast and the genuine naivete Streep brings to the part, we like her more. As the diplomat husband, Charles Dance (Guy Perron in Masterpiece Theater's '"The Jewel in the Crown") has more sex appeal and authority than Edward Herrmann had. Because Dance's Raymond Brock is clearly not a wimp, our sympathy is with him when he lashes out at Susan, but also with her for marrying him, Tracy Ullman as Susan's free-spirited friend and Sting as her anointed lover (both British rock stars turned actors) are sparkling, active presences that underline her own frustrated inertia.

These subsidiary characters, in raising all the objections that we feel and that Nelligan's dominance suppressed in the play, free us to sympathize more often with Susan Traherne, and feel her vulnerability. Nelligan, always in control, seemed too ironic, too shrewd, too blistenngly aware not to perceive the gap between her ideals and her actions. Streep, however, in her scenes with such elegant exemplars of tradition as John Gielgud as a British ambassador and Ian McKellen as a foreign service executive, seems more of a well-meaning innocent.

Under Schepisi's sometimes laborious direction—endless travelogue shots of the Dordogne and quaint French village life during the war— *Plenty* takes a while to get going. The phony, picture-postcard atmosphere of the early scenes infects Streep's performance. She seems forever out of place. But this quality of alienation suits her well as she matures, and grows ever more isolated from the people around her. Whether catatonic or lashing out in fury, she is tremendous in the bitterness and craziness of the later scenes. What makes these passages so moving is that Streep has managed to keep before us the shadow of the young woman Susan once was, who believed she could change the world. In a searing, deeply troubling yet exhilarating performance, Streep universalizes Susan. She challenges us to remember our own lost ideals, and to wonder if the world is any readier to receive the goadings of a fiercely independent woman.

Source: Molly Haskell, "A One-Man Revival of Great Women's Roles" *mMs,,* Volume XIV, no 4, October, 1985, pp. 19-20.

Adaptations

Plenty, was made into a film by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1985. Hare wrote the script and Fred Schepisi directed the film. The drama starred Meryl Streep as Susan, Tracy Ullman as Alice, Sting as Mick, Charles Dance as Raymond, and John Gielgud as Sir Leonard Darwin.

Topics for Further Study

Research the role of women in World War II. What did women contribute to resisting German dictator Adolf Hitler's forces in Europe or more specifically in France during the war?

In Scene 4, the announcer discusses the BBC series, "Musicians and Disease" after mentioning that Vonchef died "in an extreme state of senile dementia." Do you think that Susan suffers from dementia or any other psychological disease? If so, where can you locate evidence in her behavior that she is or is not rational and mentally stable

Compare and contrast Alice's perceptions about the world around her with those of Susan. In what ways are the two women similar and in what ways are they different"?

How might Susan define love. Does she care most for Lazar, Brock, or perhaps Mick? Discuss her motivation to be with each of these three men.

Research the Suez Canal incident. Do you believe that Darwin should have resigned from his post based upon your findings?

Compare and Contrast

1940s: During World War II, Great Britain envisions that it will be able to provide for the development of its colonies abroad. On February 20,1947, Great Britain announces its intention to relinquish governing power over India. By 1948, the British colonies of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma have gained independence These events indicate the downsizing of the British Empire.

Today: The majority of England's colonies have achieved independence. The British Empire as a world power is no more.

1940s: Retail sales decline in 1943 because citizens are urged to purchase items such as clothing and furniture on a need only basis. Expenditures on luxury items are low as a result. Other items are restricted such as coal.

1978: Britain enjoys a booming economy in 1978 with many of its leading indicators up from previous years.

Today: According to the *Economist,* in 1997 Britain experienced economic growth for "a fifth straight year" despite a more recent slow down.

1947: Britain and Egypt attempt to negotiate a renewal of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 which granted Britain the right to post defense troops in the Suez Canal region to protect their interest in the route's security. Negotiations break down despite Britain's voluntary evacuation of the area.

1956: President Nasser of Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal in July and in October, after making an ultimatum that Egypt and Israel withdraw from the area, Britain and France invade the Canal Zone. Egypt sinks forty ships and effectively blocks the Canal in retaliation. By November British, French and Israeli troops withdraw from the area.

Today: The Middle East continues to be a site of extensive political conflict.

What Do I Read Next?

Paris by Night is another of Hare's works. It was first published in 1988, and was written expressly for film. The story is about an English woman attending a political conference in Paris who must confront her limits and her understanding of herself.

The television play *Licking Hitler* (1978) was written by Hare at the same time he was working on *Plenty.* It takes place during World War II and, like *Plenty,* explores the themes of honesty and dishonesty in the public and private realms.

Sefton Delmar's *Black Boomerang(l962)* was used by Hare as a factual source for *Licking Hitler.* In this autobiographical work, Delmar details his direct involvement in the black propaganda efforts of Britain during World War II.

Hedda Gabler (1890), a play by Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, is the story of a strong female protagonist. The title character, Hedda, struggles with the world in which she lives much like Susan in Hare's *Plenty*—she also possesses destructive tendencies and an explosive personality. Ibsen and Hare are both known for addressing political and personal problems in their works.

Chmua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959) examines England's role as a colonial power in Nigeria. The novel traces the empire's influence on an African tribal village.

Further Study

Bull, John. *New British Political Dramatists. Howard Brenton, David Hare, Trevor Griffiths, and David Edgar,* Macmil-Ian, 1984

This work explores Hare as well as other modern English playwrights. It dedicates a thorough, m-depth chapter to Hare and his work

Childs, David. *Britain since 1945. A Political History,* Methuen, 1986.

Childs details post-World War n political issues up through 1985. The book focuses on domestic as well as foreign affairs

Dean, Joan Fitzpatnck *David Hare,* edited by Kinley E Roby, Twayne, 1990

This work offers information on the critical reception, themes, imagery, sources, settings and contexts of Hare's works

Homden, Carol. *The Plays of David Hare,* Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Homden's work is a comprehensive resource about Hare's works and includes commentary about his 1993 trilogy which includes *Racing Demon, Murmuring Judges,* and *The Absence of War.*

Oliva, Judy Lee *David Hare: Theatricalizing Politics,* UMI Research Press, 1990.

Oliva's work provides another comprehensive review of Hare's works and includes an interview with him from 1989. The appendix lists the sources for critical reviews of Hare's work

Trussler, Simon, General Editor and MalcomPage, Compiler and Associate Editor. *File on Hare,* Methuen Drama, 1990

This helpful short book provides summaries of many of Hare's works as well as quotations from Hare, his actors, and his critics about the works The text includes nine pages about *Plenty* and additional bibliographic suggestions.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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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