A Preface to Morals Study Guide

A Preface to Morals by Walter Lippmann

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Walter Lippmann was an influential journalist and political theorist of the twentieth century. *A Preface to Morals,* his most well-known and influential book, was first published in 1929.

In A Preface to Morals, Lippmann argues that in modern society traditional religious faith has lost its power to function as a source of moral authority. He asserts that ancient religious doctrine is no longer relevant to the conditions of modern life: governments have become increasingly democratized, populations have moved from rural to urban environments, and tradition in general is not suited to the dictates of modernity. Further, the democratic policy of the separation of church and state has created an atmosphere of religious tolerance, which suggests that religious faith is a matter of preference. In addition, the development of scientific method has created an atmosphere of doubt as to the claims made by religious doctrine.

Lippmann offers humanism as the philosophy best suited to replace the role of religion in modern life. He notes that the teachers of humanism are the wise men or sages, such as Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, and Spinoza, and that it is up to the individual to determine the value of their wisdom. He goes on to observe that one of the primary functions of religion is to teach the value of asceticism, or voluntary self-denial, as essential to human happiness. Lippmann describes an attitude of "disinterestedness" as essential to the development of a humanistic morality. Disinterestedness, for Lippmann, is an approach to reality that puts objective thought before personal desire. He claims that the role of the moralist in modern society is not, as in traditional religions, to chastise and punish but to teach others a humanistic morality that can fulfill the human needs traditionally filled by religion.

Lippmann's central themes in *A Preface to Morals* concern religion, modern society, moral authority, and humanism.

Author Biography

Walter Lippmann was born on September 23,1889, into a German-Jewish family in New York City. He was the son of Jacob Lippmann, a clothing manufacturer, and Daisy (maiden name Baum) Lippmann. From 1896 to 1906, he was enrolled in Sachs school for boys. In 1906, he entered Harvard University, completing his degree in only three years. At Harvard, he found that he was excluded from the popular social clubs because he was Jewish. While still in college, he organized the Harvard Socialist Club. In 1909, Lippmann began graduate study at Harvard, working as a teaching assistant for George Santayana in the philosophy department. During this time, he worked as a reporter for *Boston Common* as well as for *Everybody's Magazine.* In 1912, Lippmann had a short-lived stint in political life when he served as executive secretary to George R. Lunn, the socialist mayor of Schenectady, New York. Disillusioned with politics, he resigned his post after several months. His political concerns, however, were not abated, and soon afterward he joined the Socialist party of New York County. His first book, *A Preface to Politics,* was published in 1913. In 1914, he was invited to join the founding editors of the *New Republic* magazine. In 1917, he married Faye Albertson.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Lippmann was recruited to serve in various capacities, formulating war and peace policy. That year he left the *New Republic* to serve an appointment as assistant to Newton D. Baker, United States Secretary of War. He was then appointed to serve as secretary of the Inquiry, a think tank secretly organized by the United States government to conduct research in preparation for the Paris Peace Conference. In 1918, he was commissioned as a captain in Army Military Intelligence and appointed a member of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. He was a key figure in the development and writing of President Wilson's Fourteen Points policy in regard to postwar Europe. In 1919, he was included in a delegation that accompanied President Wilson to the Paris Peace Conference. However, Lippmann quickly became disillusioned with the terms of the peace negotiations and resigned with an honorable discharge from military service.

Lippmann returned to his position as editor of the *New Republic* in 1919. In 1920, he started a regular column in *Vanity Fair*. In 1922, he started working as an editorial writer for the *New York World* and in 1924 became the editor of the *New York World. A Preface to Morals,* Lippmann's tenth book of political philosophy, was published in 1929. In 1931, the *New York World* published its last issue, and Lippmann began a regular column, "Today and Tomorrow," for the *New York Herald-Tribune,* which remained a regular feature until 1962. In 1937, after he was caught having an affair with Helen Byrne, a married woman, he divorced Faye, and Helen divorced her husband. In 1938, Lippmann and Byrne were married and moved to Washington, D.C. In 1944, during World War II, he worked as a war correspondent in Europe. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for editorial comment in 1958 and a Pulitzer Prize for reporting of international affairs in 1962. In the early 1960s, he began to appear in television interviews. In 1963, Lippmann's "Today and Tomorrow" column was moved to the *Washington Post,* and he began a regular column for *Newsweek*. He was honored by Lyndon B. Johnson with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964. In 1967, Lippmann published his last "Today

and Tomorrow" column, and he and Helen moved from Washington, D.C., to New York City. Helen died in February of 1974, and Lippmann died on December 14 of that year.

Plot Summary

Religion in the Modern World

Lippmann addresses what he sees as a crisis facing modern society due to the increasing number of people whose lives are no longer ordered by religious conviction. He asserts that modern humanity in increasingly democratic secular societies needs to look to some form of "new orthodoxy" by which to live. He notes that it is certainly true that many in the modern world still believe in God. However, he argues, the nature of this belief, even among the clergy, is of a different nature from what it once was so that now people make a distinction between the factual world and the spiritual world. Lippmann observes that fundamentalism in religion is the exception that proves this rule: fundamentalist movements arise in reaction to the overwhelming trend in modern society toward religious doubt. He notes that this "loss of certainty" regarding religion had led to a change in how the Bible is understood. Whereas it was once understood by most as literal (yet also symbolic), it has come to be interpreted as literary analogy. Further, it is only in modern history that the concept of a conflict between religion and reason evolved. He argues that, even among the faithful, there is a seed of doubt, based upon the conception of faith as less certain than rational, scientific knowledge. He goes on to argue that a society's concept of God is always a reflection of that society's governmental system□so that, in a monarchical society God is conceived as a kingly ruler; in a feudal society, as a landholding lord, and so forth. Lippmann thus notes that in a modern democratic society, conceptions of God have lost the image of all-powerful, patriarchal authority. Further, he asserts that the modern crisis in faith is due to the fact that, over the past four hundred years, daily life has resembled less and less the conception of the universe put forth by religion.

Faith and Tradition in Modern America

Lippmann focuses on the particular character of America by pointing out a variety of reasons for the loss of religious faith that characterizes modernity. The rapid pace of change in modern society has left people without permanent landmarks by which to make sense of a religion that is based on an ancient society. Further, because America is a nation of immigrants, socially and geographically mobile, the old religions no longer resemble anything in modern life. In addition, he argues, whereas agrarian life, dependent on tradition and subject to the forces of nature, is in keeping with religious tradition and conviction, urban life dispenses with tradition and is beholden to technology rather than the natural world. Finally, Lippmann puts forth, figures of authority in American society are merely a class of wealthy socialites who possess no moral high ground in the eyes of the masses.

Separation of Church and State

Lippmann goes on to observe that the crisis of faith in modern society is partly due to changes in the relationship between church and state. The separation of church and state results in a society in which the church is no longer the overarching societal authority. Particularly, the policy of "tolerance " among religions implies that no one religion can assert supreme authority over all citizens. As a result, the individual citizen, even while faithful to his or her own religion, does not consider it to be the dominant authority in civil life. Lippmann suggests that patriotism, particularly in time of war, has to some extent supplanted the all-encompassing religious faith once exerted by the church. Further, in a capitalist society, that which represents authority in the realm of business is considered separate from religious authority. Modern society thus lacks the sense of an all-encompassing meaning and direction to human life, which was once provided by religious doctrines of destiny. Lippmann further claims that the separation of church and state has led to a separation within the individual self, in which daily human activities have no sense of one great overarching meaning. In this context, there is no "moral certitude," and no all-encompassing system of values has emerged to take its place.

Science and Religion

Lippmann observes that the role of miracles in traditional religion has been used as a source of concrete physical evidence of the existence of God. However, the development of modern science has outmoded religion in its capacity to provide concrete evidence in support of claims to truth. He asserts that the ascendance of science as a claim to truth has always posed a threat to people's capacity for religious faith. He notes that attempts to develop religious beliefs based on scientific discovery have failed on two counts: first, because scientific theory is always subject to change as a result of further scientific discovery; and second, because the assertions of science, no matter how true, can never serve the human needs traditionally satisfied by religious faith.

Humanism

Lippmann explains that, in traditional religious practice, morality was based on "divine authority," and the believer strove to act in accordance with the will of God. Since "divine authority" no longer holds the power it once did in the human mind, he asserts, modern society must find some alternative basis for morality. He puts forth that humanism is the ideal basis for moral authority in the modern world. Lippmann offers the wisdom of such figures as Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, and Spinoza, whose teachings form the basis of humanism. However, he points out that those who espouse humanism "have no credentials" on the order of the moral authority of God. Rather, the sages of humanism derive their authority from the self-government of the individual, who is required to take full responsibility for adhering to humanist teachings.

Desire and Asceticism

Lippmann discusses the persistent concern, among the "popular" religions (as he calls them), as well as the sages, with the need to place restrictions upon human desire. He asserts that asceticism (the self-imposed denial of basic human desires) is central to human happiness and "the good life." Modern capitalist society, by contrast, promotes the idea that humans should seek to freely satisfy all possible desires. Based on the theories of Sandor Ferenczi, Lippmann traces human psychological development from childhood to maturity as a process of slowly but surely learning that the world can never satisfy all of one's desires. Maturity, thus, is defined as the state of bringing one's desires into line with reality. He explains that religion has always played the part in society of imposing external standards of asceticism and self-denial on the general public. The sages, however, have confined their advice regarding asceticism to a small circle of pupils. Because, according to Lippmann, religion has ceased to serve the function of disciplining desire in modern society, there is no generalized societal code designed to enforce the curbing of individual human desires.

Evil, Disinterestedness, and the Moralist in the Modern Age

Lippmann observes that the concept of evil has been altered in the age of modernity. He explains that, traditionally, evil is seen as a matter of the judgment of God, whereas in modern society, evil is seen as a phenomenon that is created by humanity and can thus be eradicated by human action.

He asserts that in the modern world it is necessary to cultivate an attitude of "disinterestedness" in matters of moral concern. By "disinterest," Lippmann means an ability to judge matters from an objective perspective not necessarily in keeping with the personal interests of the individual. He cites scientific method as the epitome of "disinterested" endeavor. For Lippmann, "disinterestedness " is the key to formulating standards of morality in the modern world. Particularly in business, government, and sexual relations, the "three great phases of human interest," an attitude of "disinterest " is all-important.

Lippmann observes that the role of the moralist in modern society has been misconstrued. It is no longer the place of the moralist to control and punish the populace to elicit moral behavior. Rather, the role of the moralist in modern society is to teach others how to place limits on their own desires for the sake of "the good life." Lippmann describes the ideal replacement for traditional religion as a "religion of the spirit," which does not conform to a strictly defined set of beliefs but to whatever values are in the interest of "the quality of human desire."

Characters

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was the third of the three great Greek philosophers whose ideas immeasurably influenced Western thought. Aristotle is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of"well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. He mentions Aristotle as one among many sages who have advocated asceticism as essential to happiness. Lippmann later quotes from Aristotle's *Ethics* in relating the idea of virtue as a golden mean between extremes of any quality or characteristic in a person. He explains that, in contrast to the commandments of traditional religion, the ideals of human behavior espoused by Aristotle are a matter of the education and discipline of the "human will."

Buddha

The Indian-born teacher Lippmann refers to as Buddha, or Gautama Buddha, lived in the fifth or sixth century B.C. and was the founder of Buddhism, the predominant religion throughout much of Asia. Buddha is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. Buddha is among the wise men who taught the value of asceticism for the achievement of "the good life." Further, Lippmann points out that Buddha, among other sages, was concerned with teaching and self-discipline rather than with imposing commandments for human behavior. Lippmann cites Buddha as an example of a sage who did not expect more than a small number of men to live according to the ideals that he taught.

Confucius

Confucius (551-479 B.C.), born in China, became the most revered and influential teacher and philosopher in Eastern Asia. Confucius is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. Lippmann mentions the wisdom Confucius, which is that, to be happy, one must bring one's desires in line with reality. He refers to Confucius as among the sages whose wisdom was directed toward the self-discipline of the individual rather than toward the issuing of commandments for human behavior.

Havlock Ellis

Havlock Ellis (1859-1939) was an English essayist and physician known for his open-minded and controversial writings on human sexuality. Lippmann refers to the ideas of Havlock Ellis in his discussion of the effect of readily available contraception on sexual mores in the modern age.

Dr. S. Ferenczi

Sándor Ferenczi (1873-1933) was a Hungarian psychoanalyst closely associated with Sigmund Freud. Lippmann explains the psychological theory of human development from infancy to maturity, according to Dr. S. Ferenczi, as a matter of the child's process of learning to accept the submission of his own desires to the dictates of reality.

Jesus

Jesus is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. He mentions Jesus among many sages who have advocated asceticism as essential to happiness. Lippmann, however, distinguishes between Jesus as a teacher of a relatively small following during his lifetime, and Christianity as an organized "popular religion" that arose centuries after the death of Jesus.

Plato

Plato (428-348 B.C.) was the second of the three great Greek philosophers whose ideas immeasurably influenced Western thought. Plato is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. He mentions Plato among many sages who have advocated asceticism as essential to happiness.

Socrates

Socrates (470-399 B.C.) was the first of the three great Greek philosophers whose ideas immeasurably influenced Western thought. Socrates is one of the sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. He mentions Socrates among the sages who advocate some form of asceticism as essential to "the good life." He cites Socrates' *Phaedo,* which claims that the human body is an impediment to "a philosopher in search of truth." Lippmann further mentions Socrates as one who advocated self-conscious examination of one's personal motives.

Spinoza

Spinoza (1632-1677) was a Dutch-Jewish philosopher known for his development of the ideas of seventeenth century rationalism. Spinoza is one ofthe sages Lippmann regards as a source of "well-tested truths," the wisdom of which may serve the function once filled by religious doctrine. He mentions Spinoza among the sages who advocate some form of asceticism as essential to "the good life." He refers to Spinoza as among the

sages whose wisdom was directed toward the self-discipline of the individual rather than toward the issuing of commandments for human behavior.

Themes

Religion

The premise of Lippmann's argument in *A Preface to Morals* is that, in modern society, traditional religious beliefs have broken down. He makes clear that this is not to say that no one believes in God any more. Rather, he explains, the nature of religious belief has altered radically. Religion is no longer regarded as an undisputed fact but is placed in a context of doubt, even among true believers. Further, the traditional religious hierarchy, according to which God the father is all-powerful, is no longer in keeping with the power structures of a democratic society. In sum, religion no longer holds the all-encompassing authority it once held in society. Because of this, Lippmann asserts, modern society is in need of some system of values that can serve the function once served by religion.

Modern Society

Lippmann's argument is based upon the assertion that, historically, unprecedented changes have been wrought in modern society. He states that the "acids of modernity" have eaten away at traditional belief systems. Central to his thesis is the argument that traditional religion is no longer in keeping with the realities of everyday life in modern society. Because of these discrepancies, he argues, it is impossible for people in modern society to accept religious doctrine with the same unquestioning faith that was common earlier in eras of human history. He asserts that the democratization of modern societies renders many traditional beliefs meaningless. Thus, the modern citizen in a democratic society sees evidence all around that leads to doubt. For instance, the habit of religious tolerance that accompanies the democratic separation of church and state implies that no one religion can claim legitimacy over all others. Lippmann also points out that modern society has become increasingly urban, rather than rural, and that urban life is not compatible with tradition or traditional beliefs. Further, the social and geographic mobility that characterizes modern living standards encourages a habit of leaving tradition behind. For all of these reasons, Lippmann argues, modern society is not compatible with traditional religious belief and doctrine.

Moral Authority

Lippmann is particularly concerned with what he perceives to be a modern crisis of moral authority. He argues that, in modern society, the moral authority, which was once under the jurisdiction of religious belief, has lost its power. It is Lippmann's opinion that this breakdown in traditional faith is an inevitable result of the realities of modern life. He asserts that, to the extent that there is a need for moral authority, it is not because citizens in modern society are depraved but because they have lost faith in traditional

religious authority. Lippmann suggests that the wisdom of the sages, both modern and ancient, is the best source from which to derive a moral authority appropriate to the modern age. Wise men such as Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Plato, Socrates, Spinoza, and others may fill this role. However, he argues that the basis for moral authority in modern society must come from the judgment of the individual, based on her or his own assessment of the wisdom of others.

Humanism

Lippmann offers humanism as a standard for moral authority, which could appropriately replace religion in modern society. Lippmann explains that the values of humanism are derived on the basis of "human experience" rather than in accordance with divine will. Humanism, according to Lippmann, "is centered not in superhuman but in human nature." Humanism is based in the ideal of acting in accordance with that which best facilitates "human happiness," rather than an ideal dictated by some higher authority. Further, humanism does not subscribe to rigid doctrine but must adapt and respond to an ever-changing and increasingly complex society. Humanism is thus based in human experience and can be tested only by means of trial and error, and its value is determined only by the scrutiny of the individual. Lippmann explains that he subscribes to humanism because, to his mind, it is theonly system of values appropriate to modern society that can fulfill the needs hitherto fulfilled by religion.

Style

Writing Style

Lippmann has been critically acclaimed for his lucid writing style, by which he translates complex ideas, as well as historical and political analysis, into thoughtful, easily readable prose. Critics agree that this stylistic virtuosity largely accounts for Lippmann's popularity and vast readership, of both his journalistic columns and his books of political philosophy. Ronald Steel, in *Walter Lippmann and the American Centur,* praises Lippmann for his "superbly lucid literary style." Barry D. Riccio, in *Walter Lippmann,* mentions that Lippmann "wrote in the vernacular rather than in the argot of the specialist." D. Steven Blum, in *Walter Lippmann,* observes that Lippmann "tackled enduring political and moral controversies in an unaffected idiom, accessible to the general educated reader." Hari N. Dam, in *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann,* makes note of "the superb craftsmanship" of Lippmann's writing style, commenting, "Lippmann's writing has all the classical virtues balance, precision, purity and clarity." David Elliot Weingast, in *Walter Lippmann,* characterizes the essence of Lippmann's impressive style as "clear, logical, and inevitably persuasive." John Patrick Diggins, in a 1982 introduction to *A Preface to Morals,* likewise describes Lippmann's literary style as "at once relaxed, lucid, crisp, and unencumbered by heavy philosophical jargon." Diggins adds, "Asa journalist as well as an author, Lippmann displayed a felicity of expression that often rose to epigrammatic brilliance."

Epigraph

Lippmann begins each of the three parts of *A Preface to Morals* with an epigraph or brief quote. Each epigraph sums up in a few words the essence of Lippmann's message within the proceeding section of the book. Part I, "The Dissolution of the Ancestral Order," opens with "Whirl is King, having driven out Zeus," a quote from the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. Zeus thus represents the God of an ancient belief system, or "ancestral order," which has been "driven out" of or dissolved by modern culture, leaving only "Whirl," or chaos, in its place. This idea mirrors Lippmann's central argument that the "acids of modernity" have dissolved faith in traditional religion, leaving a moral vacuum in its place. Part II, "The Foundations of Humanism," opens with "The stone which the builders rejected / That same is become the head of the corner," from Luke XX: 17. Through this quote, Lippmann implies that humanism ought to become the cornerstone of a new structure of moral authority in the modern age. Part III, "The Genius of Modernity," opens with "Where is the way the light dwelleth?" from Job 38:19. Whereas the first two epigraphs are statements, the third is a question. It poses to the reader the question of where the "light" of moral authority can be found if not in traditional religion. It is interesting to note that, while Lippmann's central argument poses that traditional religions are no longer viable in the modern age, he begins two of the three main sections of *A Preface to Morals* with epigraphs drawn from Biblical sources. Lippmann thus appeals to the role of religion in addressing certain timeless

human concerns although he argues that religion is no longer able to satisfy these concerns adequately.

Historical Context

The Industrial Revolution

Lippmann's central argument in *A Preface to Morals* concerns the status of religion in the "modern age," or the "age of modernity." Lippmann does not define precisely when he considers modernity to have begun but makes broad generalizations regarding historical trends in the West over the past several centuries. However, he frequently makes reference to the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, by which many date the coming of the modern age. The Industrial Revolution broadly defines developments that gained momentum in the early nineteenth century, first and foremost in England, which encouraged rural, agrarian economies to become urban, industrial economies.

The Progressive Era

Lippmann's early writing and political thought is frequently associated with the outlook of the Progressive Era in American history. The Progressive movement names a trend in American political activism that began in the 1890s as a response to economic depression in both rural and urban areas. Progressivism, which achieved many successes over a twenty- to thirty-year period, was characterized by a push for social reform and the placement of legal limitations on the power of industrialists. Social services were organized to aid the poor and underprivileged, while legal measures were instituted to curb industrial monopolies. In 1894, the National Municipal League was organized to clean up corruption at the level of local government. Other Progressive movement concerns included workers' rights and benefits, such as child labor laws. The presidential terms of Theodore Roosevelt (from the assassination of President McKinley in 1901 through the 1904 election to 1908) was characterized by great strides in Progressive movement issues. The two terms of President Woodrow Wilson (1912-1920) were also characterized by a strong showing of Progressive movement concerns.

World War I

World War I was a major concern early in Lippmann's career as a journalist and public policy maker. When the war broke out in Europe in 1914, the American policy was firmly one of neutrality, but as the war wore on the United States became increasingly (unofficially) sympathetic to the Allies and increasingly defensive toward Germany. A series of incidents functioned to turn the tide of American popular opinion, as well as government policy, toward military intervention in Europe. In May 1915, a German submarine sank the British *Lusitania,* an unarmed liner, without warning, killing 128 Americans (as well as others). Early in 1917, Germany opted for extensive submarine warfare against nonmilitary as well as military vessels, as a result of which the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany. After the Germans began sinking

American ships, the United States was drawn into the war in April of 1917. The entryof the United States on the side of the Allies led to victory against the Central Powers late in 1918.

President Wilson and the Paris Peace Conference

Early in 1918, President Wilson presented to Congress the Fourteen Points that became the signature of his presidency. Lippmann had been recruited as one of the members of the Inquiry, a think-tank organized by Wilson to research, formulate, and write the Fourteen Points, which spelled out Wilson's recommendations for postwar world peace. Among these points was a call for self-determination among nations currently struggling for national independence and for the organization of a League of Nations to protect world peace. In January 1919, the Paris Peace Conference met to determine the outcome of World War I, based on Wilson's recommendations in the Fourteen Points. Lippmann was invited to join Wilson's delegation to Paris but soon resigned his post due to his disillusionment with the peace negotiations. The Versailles Treaty was the document that resulted from international negotiations over the Fourteen Points, many of which were retained, though others were compromised or dispensed with. However, the United States Congress voted twice against signing the Treaty of Versailles, and America never became a member of the League of Nations.

Critical Overview

Lippmann's Influence

Walter Lippmann is generally considered to be the most important, most popular, and most widely influential political journalist of the twentieth century.

Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, in *The Essential Lippmann,* consider him "perhaps the most important American political thinker of the twentieth century" and "a major contributor to the American way of life and thought." D. Steven Blum, in *Walter Lippmann,* asserts that Lippmann is "the century's foremost political journalist" and "the preeminent chronicler of the political events of the age." Ronald Steel, in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century,* asserts that Lippmann "was without a doubt the nation's greatest journalist."

In addition to his critical acclaim, Lippmann's books of political philosophy and regular newspaper and magazine columns were extraordinarily popular. Marquis Childs, in *Walter Lippmann and His Times,* describes Lippmann as "a critic who, more than any other American today, has achieved through his pen a worldwide audience." Lare and Rossiter concur, "his audience has been the largest and most insatiable ever to pay the homage of thoughtful attention to a serious-minded American writer." Larry L. Adams, in *Walter Lippmann,* states that Lippmann was "beyond question the most widely read American social thinker of the twentieth century and one of the most respected." David Elliott Weingast, in *Walter Lippmann,* likewise declares that Lippmann's influence "has helped to determine the opinions of the American people on many urgent issues."

While popular among a worldwide audience of readers, Lippmann remained, throughout his career, extremely influential among major political figures in the United States and abroad. As quoted in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century,* when Lippmann was only twenty-five, Theodore Roosevelt dubbed him the "'most brilliant young man of his age in all the United States.'" Steel goes on to describe the scope of Lippmann's political influence, noting, "Influence was Lippmann's stock-in-trade ... what made him a powerful public figure."

He commanded no divisions, but he did have enormous power over public opinion. This in turn gave him a power over Presidents, politicians and policymakers. They did not, by any means, always do what Lippmann advised. But they listened to him and sought his support□and they learned not to take his opposition lightly. Lippmann commanded a loyal and powerful constituency, some ten million of the most politically active and articulate people in America. Many of these people literally did not know what they ought to think about the issues of the day until they read what Walter Lippmann had said about them. A politician could ignore that kind of power only at his own risk.

Lare and Rossiter further describe Lippmann's high-ranking political influence:

in most of the great political and moral dialogues of modern America, Walter Lippmann has been a leading participant. In his own style, at his own pace, and largely on his own terms, he has spoken out on the issues of the age□and spoken with an authority that persuades presidents, premiers, foreign ministers, and perhaps even cardinals and commissars to pause and listen.

Praise for A Preface to Morals

A Preface to Morals, first published in 1929, was an immediate success and remained Lippmann's most popular book. Within the first year of publication, six editions were sold out, and the book was translated into a dozen different languages. *A Preface to Morals* was soon selected for the extremely popular Book-of-the-Month Club. Several critics have tried to account for the book's success. Michael Kirkhorn in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* referring to it as "one of the most, if not the most, profoundly knowing" of Lippmann's books, observes, "The book struck a chord for a generation seeking recovery from the disillusionment of the late 1920s." Steel notes that *A Preface to Morals* was none less than "a popular sensation" and was "perfectly attuned to its times, codifying anxieties of a generation." Steel goes on to explain,

Lippmann had put his finger on the problem of the moment, laid it out in terms simple to grasp, phrased it in a vocabulary that flattered the reader's intelligence, and proposed a self-sacrificing but noble way out of the maze.

In addition to its timeliness upon initial publication, *A Preface to Morals* remains an important commentary on current societal concerns. John Patrick Diggins in a 1982 introduction to *A Preface to Morals* asserts that Lippmann's "heroic book speaks forcefully to us today." Diggins continues, "every generation interested in the relationship of politics to morals must come to terms with Lippmann's seminal work." Further, Diggins observes,

it is a measure of a great book that, in addition to reflecting the immediate context in which it was written, it illuminates issues that transcend the context, issues not less universal than alienation, authority, knowledge, and morality.

Diggins concludes, "It is precisely because the problems he raised remain unresolved today that we need to consider them."

Criticism of A Preface to Morals

A Preface to Morals, however, received its fair share of criticism. Reviewers in religious periodicals criticized Lippmann for being too disdainful of religion while atheistic reviewers criticized him for espousing religiosity. His own teacher and mentor, George Santayana, even offered harsh criticism of Lippmann's work. While praising the work on many counts, Blum concurs that *A Preface to Morals "was* gravely flawed." Common criticisms of Lippmann's broader body of work were also applied to *A Preface to Morals*. Steel notes that Lippmann "was not always right and he was not universally popular." The most common criticismof Lippmann's work is that it is inconsistent, even

characterized by self-contradiction. Adams observes, "Most students of Lippmann's work have been troubled by what they find to be a lack of consistency in his work, contradictions which reach his fundamental assumptions." Weingast comments, "Although Lippmann has clarified countless individual issues for his readers, he has offered a number of interpretations of dubious merit" and cautions readers to read Lippmann with a degree of skepticism:

Any tendency to rely on him as a source of final authority is unmerited. He is to be read with skepticism, with the feeling that his views are the serious reflections of a highly literate, well-informed mind, but also with the feeling that he has been wrong before and will very likely err again.

However, Adams asserts, "The inconsistencies in Lippmann's lifework are interesting and important; but of more enduring interest is their underlying unity, which mirrors his own search for meaning and coherence in a chaotic century." Weingast concludes that, although Lippmann's body of journalism and political philosophy is of singular merit, "his views, nevertheless, are to be taken as suggestive rather than definitive."

Lippmann's Legacy

Hari N. Dam in *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann* sums up Lippmann's legacy as a political philosopher of the modern age:

Whatever the verdict of posterity, Lippmann, with his hatred of tyranny and oppression, with his passion for freedom and justice, with his mellowed sapience and charity, with his abundant optimism and earnestness, with his serene temper and calm dignity, is today and will always be a source of comfort, hope and inspiration for free men in this troubled world of ours.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Brent has a Ph.D. in American culture, specializing in film studies, from the University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in the history of American cinema. In the following essay, she discusses the relationship between art and religion in Lippmann's work.

In a chapter of Walter Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals* entitled "Lost Provinces," Lippmann discusses three areas of human society that are "lost provinces" of religious authority: business, the family, and art. Of the three, Lippmann reserves his most extensive discussion for the history of artistic creation in relation to the history of religion. He argues that while art was for centuries almost entirely dictated by religious doctrine, in the modern age art has lost its moorings to religion and now drifts in the realm of philosophical uncertainty and chaos. Although Lippmann's discussion of art represents a small section of *A Preface to Morals,* it serves as a concrete example of the far-reaching impact that the status of religion in the modern age has upon all aspects of human society. In the course of his discussion, Lippmann makes reference to several centuries of the history of the relationship between art and religion. A closer look at Lippmann's brief discussion of art will help to illuminate his broader argument about the place of religion in the modern world.

In a section entitled "The Disappearance of Religious Painting," Lippmann describes the traditional relationship between art and religion, and the dissolution of this relationship by the "acids of modernity." Lippmann argues that religion is no longer the predominant theme in modern art because "the great themes of popular religion have ceased to inspire the imagination of modern men." He traces the course of this disillusionment from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. Lippmann explains that, by the end of the fifteenth century, art began to reflect the fact that religious faith was no longer "naively believed" as it had once been. In the sixteenth century, he continues, with the Reformation and Counter Reformation, as well as with the rise of industrial capitalism, artists became increasingly less concerned with religious themes. He concludes that, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists have engaged in "feverish experimentation " in the context of "our present bewilderment " over the loss of religion as an organizing principal for artistic creation. Lippmann argues against the theory that artists have ceased to paint religious themes because those with the power and money to buy art are no longer interested in religion. Rather, he asserts, religion is no longer the central thematic concern of artists in the modern age because "the will to produce" such works has been dissolved by "the acids of modernity."

In a section entitled "The Loss of Heritage," Lippmann further points out that the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation have functioned to his dissolve the traditional relationship between religion and art. He observes that, in a world without religious doubt, the artist was free to represent religious themes in concrete images, such as depicting God as "a benign old man." However, during the Reformation and Counter Reformation, religious doctrine became more complex and abstract in response to new expressions of religious doubt. Artistic representations of

religious themes could no longer be represented through concrete and simple images. Lippmann asserts that the growth of religious "skepticism" thus "dissolves the concreteness" of religious imagery with the expression of abstractions. He notes that although this separation between art and religion has developed over some four hundred years, it is only in recent generations that its effect has been manifested. Thus, only in the last hundred years has the artist been faced with the task of representing "a world without any accepted understanding of human life," once supplied by religious doctrine.

In a section entitled "The Artist Formerly," Lippmann explains the historical circumstances that dictated artistic representation of religious themes up to the modern age. He notes that while originally the work of the artist was to be kept within certain guidelines of religious doctrine, in the beginnings of the modern age religious authorities felt the need to determine more strictly the exact specifications of the artist's representation of religious themes. In particular, he observes the religious doubt initiated by the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century completely changed the relationship of art to religion. The Catholic Counter Reformation, coming on the heels of the Reformation, attempted to counteract this trend by further codifying the role of the artist in depicting specific religious images.

In a section entitled "The Artist as Prophet," Lippmann observes that in the modern age artists have been left to their own devices to define theirrelationship to society. He notes that two possible solutions to this dilemma have been offered: either that artists are themselves "prophets" of spiritual insight or that artists have no connection to the expression of greater meaning and create art only for "art's sake." Addressing the first solution, Lippmann argues that artists are indeed not prophets. He asserts that, in general, artists are not "thinkers," and they have no particular claim to "wisdom" but are merely craftsmen with a talent for representing objects in a visual medium. He goes on to note that in the absence of religious themes by which artistic creations derive greater meaning, "the modern painter has ceased not only to depict any theory of destiny but has ceased to express any important human mood in the presence of destiny."

In a section entitled "Art for Art's Sake," Lippmann explores the second solution to the question of the role of art in modern society: "art has nothing to do with prophecy, wisdom, and the meaning of life, but has to do only with art." This conception of art, born of the age of modernity, is known as "art for art's sake." Lippmann contends that most modern artists subscribe to the concept of "art for art's sake," which implies that it is not the role of the artist to imbue life with any greater meaning. He goes on to observe, however, that no art is without philosophical implications, as "some sort of philosophy is implied in all human activity." He thus concludes that modern "art for art's sake" expresses an essentially atheistic philosophy, whereby "Experience has no underlying significance, man himself has no station in the universe, and the universe has no plan which is more than a drift of circumstances, illuminated here and there by flashes of self-consciousness."

In a section entitled "The Burden of Originality," Lippmann argues that the very notion of the artist's claim to "originality" is a symptom of the modern age. Throughout most of

history, artists have been required to depict images derived from traditional religious doctrine. Therefore, "originality " was never considered to be the domain of the artist. However, in the modern age, artists are required to be "original" because they have no tradition from which to draw their subjects and themes. He observes that the very notion of the artist as a tortured "soul" undergoing "storm and stress" is a symptom of the modern artist's unprecedented task of creating "order out of the chaos of experience" to create a work of art. He goes on to say that, as religion no longer functions to provide an overarching sense of meaning upon which artistscan base their work, artists are left to flounder in a chaotic world of disconnected ideas and philosophies out of which the significance of their art must be gleaned. Because these ideas are no longer universal or generally understood, Lippmann claims, modern art is often "uninteresting" and "confusing " to most people.

Lippmann's discussion of the changing relationship between art and religion that developed in the age of modernity serves as an extended example of his larger thesis regarding the effects of the "acids of modernity" on the role of religion in modern life. He asserts that "What was happening to painting is precisely what has happened to all the other separated activities of men." In art, as well as in other realms of modern life, the dissolution of religious faith has meant the loss of a sense of "cosmic order" unifying all of human activity and experience.

Source: Liz Brent, Critical Essay on *A Preface to Morals,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Winters is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, she discusses themes in, and critical responses to, Walter Lippmann's A Preface to Morals.

When Walter Lippmann's book, *A Preface to Morals,* was published in 1929, many people in American society were perplexed by a growing sense of alienation and disillusionment. Old religious values, faith in the forward progress of science, and optimism no longer seemed appropriate in a world that had seen the unprecedented horrors of World War I□horrors that were unrelieved by religionaccompanied by carnage that was assisted, not prevented, by modern science. Many people, like Lippmann, felt that the old sources of authority in society□the church, the government, and other traditional authorities such as the family and class structure□were no longer relevant and that faith in them had been irretrievably corrupted by the changes of modern life. Some of these people advocated that people return to more orthodox, traditional religions as an antidote to the despair so prevalent in modern life, but Lippmann believed it was too late for that.

As Lippmann points out, many people in earlier ages who believed wholeheartedly in traditional religion had a sense of order and destiny. They may have argued about the details and even had wars over them, but, he writes, "They had no doubt that there was an order in the universe which justified their lives because they were a part of it. The acids of modernity have dissolved that order for many of us." As critic Edmund Wilson remarks, Lippmann believed that the churches, and belief in them, have become "impossible" for most modern people.

Some people are unperturbed by their loss of faith, but for many others this loss of authority and meaning is a problem. "Among those who no longer believe in the religion of their fathers, some are proudly defiant, and many are indifferent. But there are also a few, perhaps an increasing number, who feel that there is a vacancy in their lives," Lippmann writes. He also notes that, when questioned, most of these people would say that without a religious faith they have no certainty that there is any significance or value to their lives or that anything they do really matters in the larger scheme of things□since there apparently is no larger scheme of things. In other words, without the compelling moral codes handed down by tradition and religion, how do people determine what is right or wrong? How do people decide what to do with their lives? How do people find meaning in the way they spend their time?

Lippmann was not interested in attacking the faith of those who were religious; he notes at the beginning of the book that if some people still have a traditional faith, then he is happy for them, but his book is addressed specifically to unbelievers who are trying to answer these questions.

In addition to traditional religion, Lippmann also questions traditional political views and obedience to them. He asks readers to consider words such as "the state, sovereignty, independence, democracy, representative government, national honor, liberty and

loyalty," and he comments that very few people could define these terms but that despite this lack of understanding, most would fight to the death to defend them. These terms, like religious ideas, have become mere "push buttons" that set off "emotional reflexes," and blind patriotism, like blind faith, is no longer an option for most people.

In *A Preface to Morals,* Lippmann tries to create a philosophy of morality and authority that is not based in any religion and is also not based on the traditional sources of authority in Western civilization: the state, class differences, family, law, or custom. All these old structures of authority demand obedience to particular codes of behavior but can not provide logical reasons *why* their codes should be obeyed; they are much like a parent who says, "Because I said so," to a questioning child. Lippmann believes that this is not a good enough reason for obedience and indeed that the very notion of obedience to some petty, man-made authority should be tossed out.

Lippmann advocates "disinterest" as the cornerstone of the new, enlightened person; "disinterest " implies detachment from one's own self-interest. To achieve this state of calm disinterest, he believes that people need to become more self-aware, with the help of modern psychology, which can aid them in becoming aware of their previously unexamined thoughts and feelings and ultimately in becoming detached from them. He writes, "To become detached from one's passions and to understand them consciously is to render them disinterested. . . . This is the principle by which a humanistic culture becomes bearable." He also notes that throughout human history, and in all known religions, the qualities that are most highly valued are based on disinterest: "courage, honor, faithfulness, veracity, justice, temperance, magnanimity, and love."

He also writes that if the reader is able to observe their feelings, they should take note of them, consider them objectively, and determine why they have them, so they can be liberated from them. "To detach ourselves from our own fears, hates, and lusts, to examine them, name them, identify their origin, and finally to judge them, is somehow to rob them of their imperiousness." Once this conscious awareness and freedom is achieved, the energy formerly wasted on them can be used in more productive pursuits. He also writes that human suffering is often caused not by an actual event but by our response tothat event and the meaning we give to the event. For example, a marathoner approaching the last mile of a 26.2-mile race may be in a great deal of pain but won't experience the pain as such if she is winning the race. On the other hand, someone forced to run 26.2 miles as a punishment would experience the same physical sensations but would suffer greatly because a very different meaning is attached to all those miles.

Lippmann believes that things and events are not necessarily inherently evil; what is perceived as evil is not an innate quality but comes from an attitude toward the thing or event and a reaction to it. "For things are neutral and evil is a certain way of experiencing them," he writes. "To realize this is to destroy the awfulness of evil."

Lippmann gives various examples in the book, but he doesn't say how to respond to events that most people would perceive as truly evil□regardless of the attitude of the participants□such as the Holocaust of World War II, when millions of innocent people

were tortured and killed. Could those people simply change the way they responded to their fate and thereby lessen the evil of what happened to them? This is doubtful, and it would seem that, no matter what attitude one took, it would be difficult to "destroy the awfulness" of such events by changing one's mental attitude or cultivating disinterestedness. Of course, Lippmann wrote his book before the immense atrocities of World War II. On a smaller scale, however, consider the case of a child who is starving to death; it doesn't seem likely that the child's suffering could be lessened by a change in attitude.

However, Lippmann's analysis is true for many events in modern life: attitude is everything. His description of the enlightened modern person seems almost Buddhist at times; in fact, he does mention the Buddha repeatedly, along with other spiritual and philosophical teachers. "Buddha did, to be sure, teach that craving was the source of all misery, and that it must be wholly extinguished." Lippmann illustrates how a man free from desire is able to live more easily:

The mature man would take the world as it comes, and within himself remain quite unperturbed.... Would he be hopeful? Not if to be hopeful was to expect the world to submit rather soon to his vanity. Would he be hopeless? Hope is an expectation of favors to come, and he would take his delights here and now. Since nothing gnawed at his vitals, neither doubt, nor ambition, nor frustration, nor fear, he would move easily through life.

A Preface to Morals became an immediate bestseller, despite its philosophical subject matter, and was praised by a wide variety of writers and thinkers, as well as by the public, who were captivated by Lippmann's application of philosophy to ordinary modern life. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. writes in *Walter Lippmann and His Times,* "At the depths of the Depression (if my memory is correct), the *New Yorker's* 'Talk of the Town,' commenting on the reported formation of the Monarchist party in the United States, said that many Americans would be glad to settle for Walter Lippmann as king."

Lippmann's style is remarkably clear, considering his subject matter; he writes in an elegant but almost conversational manner and provides examples from ancient philosophers, modern psychologists and writers, the Bible, and other religious works, as well as from history and modern life, to give readers a clearer understanding of his ideas.

In *From the Uncollected Edmund Wilson,* in an essay on *A Preface to Morals,* critic Edmund Wilson describes the book as "beautifully organized, beautifully clear ... both outspoken and persuasive in bringing news which has been uneasily awaited," and he writes, "No one else that I have read has performed this task of discrediting traditional religion at once so tactfully and so uncompromisingly as Lippmann." However, he also praises the fact that Lippmann doesn't simply discredit faith in traditional religion and then leave the reader in despair. He writes, "I recommend this book as an antidote to... [the work of] critics who tend to despair of modern civilization."

Wilson also writes that Lippmann's criticism of popular religion is unsurprising, given that manyother critics have noted the same gap between belief and modern religious attitudes, but that Lippmann' s criticism of government and traditional politics is refreshing and surprising. However, Wilson notes, Lippmann's belief that everyone in society, and society as a whole, could become enlightened and run on the basis of benign disinterest seems somewhat naïve. Nevertheless, he writes, "these considerations do not, in any case, damage Lippmann's principal arguments."

In *Walter Lippmann,* Larry L. Adams writes that *A Preface to Morals* is one of Lippmann's "best received and most widely read books" but notes that Lippmann's former professor and philosophical hero, George Santayana, whose influence Lippmann acknowledges in the book, wrote an ambiguous but "generally skeptical" review of it, in which he implies that Lippmann's view is naïve. Santayana also remarks, with irony, that it would be interesting to see what will be "the ruling passions, favorite pleasures, and dominant beliefs of mankind when the hitherto adventurous selfish human animal has become thoroughly socialized, mechanized, hygienic, and irreligious." Adams also comments that one weakness in the book is the fact that Lippmann's emphasis on disinterest is directly counter to the prevailing values of American culture, which emphasizes individualism and hearty self-interest as the basis of economic and social freedom. However, Adams writes, Lippmann is correct in pointing out that no society could survive and thrive without some form of moral structure, and he finds Lippmann ahead of his time because he draws wisdom not only from the Western religious and philosophical traditions but also from the sages of other cultures, such as Buddha and Confucius.

In his introduction to the Transaction Publishers' edition of the book, John Patrick Diggins notes that the great praise lavished on Lippmann's book is not universal: liberals criticize Lippmann because his vision of a new society doesn't provide for any restraints on individuals' desires; other, more radical critics note that this kind of enlightened society, based on benign disinterest, could not succeed until all vestiges of injustice and strife are eliminated. Diggins, like Adams, also comments that although these critics don't mention it, an inherent conflict exists between Lippmann's ideal□disinterest and freedom from desire□and the demands of a free, capitalistic society, which of course is based on "maximiz[ing] desire through the pleasures of consumption."

However, Diggins praises Lippmann's ability to "turn the mundane issues of life into philosophical riddles" as well as his style, which is "at once relaxed, lucid, crisp, and unencumbered by heavy philosophical jargon." He also praises Lippmann's "daring enterprise" of attempting to create a framework of moral authority not grounded in old institutions that would not withstand a true intellectual challenge to their orders. Diggins writes, "That is why his book speaks forcefully to us today, when our emotions feel the need for authority but our mind demands that authority be rational and just."

Source: Kelly Winters, Critical Essay on *A Preface to Morals,*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #3

Hart has degrees in English literature and creative writing, and she is a copy editor and published writer. In this essay, she examines Lippmann's definitions of asceticism and humanism, as well as the purposes he proposes for turning to them.

Walter Lippmann wrote *A Preface to Morals* in 1929, so it might be necessary for some readers to practice some forgiveness in reference to Lippmann's sometimes elitist and sexist attitude. That being said, there is no denying that Lippmann was an intelligent man with a wide scope of interests that spanned topics in philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology, and science. Although some of his information may be outdated by the discoveries in quantum physics and psychology that have taken place in the seventy plus years that have passed since his book was published, his insights and his understanding of human nature far exceed his time. His inquiry into the history of theology and its implications for modern society still hold a valid position today. His discussion of the demise of popular religion based on old orthodoxy offers an explanation for a continued uneasiness felt in contemporary society; and his theories of humanism based on a self-regulated asceticism, provide an interesting and stimulating discussion of human nature.

Lippmann claims, in his opening remarks, that there is an increasing number of people in modern society, "who feel that there is a vacancy in their lives." And it is to these people, the so-called unbelievers, that Lippmann directs his thoughts. For those who are "perplexed by the consequences" of their lack of religion or disturbed by the hole that the lack of religion has placed in their lives, Lippmann digs into his own repertoire of collected knowledge in an attempt to extract some new insights. His attempts are aimed at putting a sense of significance and morality back into the soul of the unbeliever, qualities that are lost when a religion no longer makes sense to people who find that the teachings of the old orthodox churches no longer apply to their modern concepts of life.

By the old orthodoxy, Lippmann refers to religions that are based on a somewhat literal interpretation of the Bible; a book they believe was created with "wisdom backed by the power of God himself." These religions teach that the Bible contains the truths of life that cannot be wrong. They also teach that there is a Supreme Being, "who is more powerful than all the kings of earth together." He is also the "ultimate judge of the universe." For these believers, God is a "magical King" who rules the universe and issues all commands for living a good life. If followed, the commandments will lead the believers to salvation. For these believers, life has meaning, and that life is built on a solid foundation of morality that is defined through the church by the word of God. These people "felt themselves to be living within the framework of a universe which they called divine because it corresponded with their deepest desires." For this "common man," as Lippmann puts it, life is more satisfying because rules are laid out, and the dictates of life are sanctified. A person knows what they have to do to make it through this life and eventually reap the benefits of a "concrete world hereafter." Believing in a god who not only knows a person's "deeds but their motives" means that there is "no hole deep enough into which a man could crawl to hide himself from the sight of God."

Morality, then, in this kind of belief is easily defined. All a person has to do is bend his or her own will to the will of God. People who believe in this type of religion have no choice but to obey this divine and omniscient ruler. Their codes of morality include all distinctions between what is considered good and what is evil, as well as how they should conduct themselves in private life and in their society.

A way of life driven by the laws of God survives without much interpretation or questioning as long as people lived close to the soil, states Lippmann. Their "ways of living changed little in the course of generations," and because their ways rarely changed, there were always at hand typical solutions to every problem, based on practical experiences from the past. But it is not so easy for the modern population who live, more than likely, in anurban society that is far removed from family and their stories of generational experience. Added to this is the fact that in the last four hundred years, and more significantly since the nineteenth century, there have been many influences that have "conspired to make incredible the idea that the universe is governed by a kingly person."

Lippmann does not mean to say that most people living in modern cities do not believe in God. What he does mean is that many people now "no longer believe in him simply and literally." They "can no longer honestly say that he exists." At best, the modern person is left with what Lippmann refers to as an indefinite God. In addition to this, science, with its strong influence on modern society, has made people believe that before something can be stated as a fact, it has to be proven. This concept has eroded the possibility of modern society accepting anything without first questioning it. This weakens religious beliefs and once the basic beliefs of religion are weakened, "the disintegration of the popular religion begins." In the place of all people living under the dictates of one, true religion, modern society is made up of many "detached individuals."

As a result of this disintegration, old religious orthodoxy becomes at best a "somewhat archaic ... quaint medley of poetry, rhetoric, [and] fable." The lessons of the Bible might still ring true, but the authority behind the words is missing, and there exists no basis for a functioning morality because there is no longer certainty in a god to fear, a god who knows all thoughts and will pronounce the last judgment. Although people can themselves conceive ethical codes, there no longer exists a belief in a power strong enough to demand compliance with those codes. Humans are fallible; therefore, their ethical codes would be fallible. If God is an uncertainty, then the punishment for disobeying the codesas well as the rewards for obeying them are uncertain. With this cloud of uncertainty prevailing over modern society, with no definite God looking over and watching their every move and thought, people feel they no longer have a sense of self-importance. It is from this lack of importance that the hole, or vacant feeling, is created.

This questioning, uncertainty, and feeling of insignificance intensifies the "separated activities" of modern people. There is nothing remaining that pulls people together. From the disintegration of the church follows the disintegration of state and family. In earlier times, the laws of a single god governed everything from government to family, art, science, and morality. In modern times, everyone works toward his or her own separate

interest. Therein lies another problem for the moralist. Not only is there no remaining authority to demand obedience to a code of ethics; no longer is there infallible belief in the old code; but also there no longer is anything strong enough to pull people together to even think about creating a new, unified code. In modern society, there are only individuals left to their own devices to define their own private codes. These individuals are also left with only a vague sense of punishment or reward as consequences to either breaking or following those codes.

It is from this state of confusion and individualism that Lippmann suggests humanism, a philosophy that puts a positive spin on this situation, recognizing not the weaknesses of individuals but rather the potential ability of an individual to define a viable code of morals for him- or herself. Humanists believe in a morality in which virtue is not commanded by an outside divine force, but rather virtue "must be willed out of the personal conviction and desire" of the individual. In other words, a person must will him- or herself to know and to act upon the difference between what they believe is right and wrong. But how do individuals come to these conclusions? How do they come to understand themselves well enough to make rational definitions about something as abstract as morals? To these questions, Lippmann offers the remaining chapters of his book.

"In a world where no man desired what he could not have, there would be no need to regulate human conduct and therefore no need for morality," states Lippmann. But modern society is in no way close to that utopia. People have needs. People have desires. And not all needs and desires can be fulfilled. There is a belief, however, that modern society appears to have assumed, and it is a belief that "the human passions, if thoroughly liberated from all tyrannies and distortions, would by their fulfillment achieve happiness." This is a false belief, according to Lippmann, because he believes that there are not enough resources in this world to satisfy the needs of every person. "Desires are ... unlimited and insatiable, and therefore any ethics which does not recognize the necessity of putting restraint upon naive desire is inherently absurd." And it is at this point in his discussion that Lippmann turns to his definition of asceticism and shows how it can be used in conjunction with the philosophy of humanism to help individuals define a code of morality.

Asceticism is a practice or discipline that helps to curb desires. It is not a total dismissal or denouncement of desires, as is popularly held, but rather a "discipline of the mind and body to fit men for the service of an ideal." No one can make a list of what is good and what is bad because this would be "an attempt to understand something which is always in process of change." The task of disciplining, defining, weighing, and interpreting, according to humanism, relies totally on the individual; and the individual must rely on "his own intuitions, commonsense, and sense of life." The goal of asceticism is maturity. Toward this goal, Lippmann suggests, the education of the individual should be set up. The educators should base their lessons on the teachings of the sages of "high religion," who include great thinkers such as Spinoza, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and the Buddha. Through the teachings of these sages, one would learn the art of living, which would show every individual how "to pass gracefully from youth to old age," and eventually, "to learn to die."

The principle underlying this educational process is that individuals need to recognize the meaning of their desires. In doing this, they will learn that their emotions are often irrational. Many desires are remnants from childhood that are carried over into adult life. Once these desires are made rational, the individual would realize that many of the immediately desirable objects are not quite as desirable as once thought. Also, with a rational understanding, the undesirable would become more tolerable. When the emotions and desires of a child are carried over into the adult world, the consequences are that the individual begins to assume, when things go wrong, that the world is out to get him or her and that life owes him or her something. The immature individual also grabs at everything that passes by andcovets it in fear that someone might someday take it away.

In contrast, the mature person, having disciplined his or her emotions, will learn to want "what he can posses. . . learn to hold on to things which do not slip away ... to hold on to them ... not by grasping ... but by understanding them and by remembering them." Through the alteration of immature emotions, people learn that being good is not good just because God demands it, but because through experience they will come to find that being good "yields happiness, serenity, whole-heartedness." Salvation, according to the teachings of the high religion, is not achieved by appeasing an almighty judge but rather "a condition of the soul which is reached only by some kind of self-discipline."

So if asceticism is a discipline that makes people fit for the service of an ideal, the final question to be answered would necessarily be, what is the ideal? Lippmann defines his concept of the ideal in his last chapter. First he describes the role of the moralist, who cannot, in a time of unsettled customs such as in modern times, "teach what is revealed," for there are no revelations that fit contemporary models, but rather, "he must reveal what can be taught. He has to seek insight rather than to preach." Lippmann then refers to Aristotle, who lived in an age that also was unsettled, somewhat similar to contemporary society. The function of the moralist, states Aristotle, is to "promote good conduct by discerning and explaining the mark at which things aim." An individual as well as a whole nation, must know what its ideals are to understand why the discipline is needed in the first place. It is through the moralist that people need to be reminded what they are moving toward. In general, by quoting Confucius, Lippmann states the goal of human effort as following "what the heart desires without transgressing what is right." Lippmann calls this the "religion of the spirit." It is a religion that does not depend on commandments, does not profess to know the truth, and is only concerned with "the quality of human desire."

Lippmann does not direct his comments to everyone. He realizes that many people are very comfortable in their beliefs. But to those who are searching for answers, his book provides stimulating insights into questions that may have begun with Aristotle, but continue to haunt contemporary society. By looking back into history, as well as ahead to possible consequences if answers are not found, Lippmann opens the mind of the reader and in essence says, here, if you are confused or feeling empty about life, why not try this one.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *A Preface to Morals,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Topics for Further Study

Lippmann's basic premise in *A Preface to Morals* is that religious authority has been essentially eroded in the modern world. To what extent do you agree with this assessment? As a replacement for traditional religion, Lippmann suggests a philosophy of humanism, drawing from the timeless wisdom of sages throughout history. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this solution? What might you propose instead as a system of moral authority suitable to the modern age?

Lippmann refers repeatedly to sages throughout history, such as Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Plato, and Spinoza. Learn more about one of these figures. What are his basic teachings? To what extent do you find his ideas useful as a guide to human thought and behavior in modern society?

Lippmann is often seen as a product of the Progressive Era in American history, lasting from the 1890s through 1920. Learn more about the Progressive Era. Who were some of the key figures in the Progressive movement? What changes were made in America at the economic, legal, political, and social levels? To what extent have the changes made during the Progressive Era survived today?

Two of the primary influences on Lippmann's political philosophy were his teachers George Santayana and William James. Learn more about one of these men. What were his central tenets? What are his major works? To what extent does Lippmann's argument in *A Preface to Morals* reflect this influence? To what extent does Lippmann deviate from the ideas of his teachers?

In 1914, Lippmann was one of the founding members of the *New Republic,* a weekly magazine focused on discussion of political concerns. Find a recent issue of the *New Republic*. What general political standpoint do the articles seem to support? Pick one article on a topic of interest to you. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this article?

Compare and Contrast

1890s: Economic depression in the United States helps to spark a mass movement toward economic and social reform known as the Progressive movement.

1930s: Just months after the publication of Lippmann' s *A Preface to Morals,* the stock market crash of 1929 begins the Depression era in the United States. Increased production as a result of Europe's entry into World War II lifts the United States out of the Depression.

1990s: The United States enjoys a period of economic prosperity characterized by low unemployment as well as many average Americans profiting from stock market investments.

1914-1918: World War I breaks out in Europe. The United States enters the war in 1917, helping to turn the tide in favor of the Allied forces. The postwar peace negotiations are made in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference. Lippmann attends the Paris Peace Conference as a member of President Wilson's special delegation but is disillusioned by the terms of the peace treaty and resigns his post.

1939-1945: World War II breaks out in Europe. The United States enters the war in 1941 after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Lippmann serves as a war correspondent in Europe.

1990-1991: In August 1990, Iraq, under President Saddam Hussein, invades the neighboring oil-rich nation of Kuwait. The Persian Gulf War begins on January 16, 1991 when the United States, along with forces from British, French, Egyptian, and other nations, leads an air offensive against Iraq in a military operation known as Desert Storm. The armed conflict ends on February 28, 1991 with the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq.

1914: Lippmann is one of the founding editors of the *New Republic,* a weekly magazine promoting the values of the Progressive movement.

1917-1919: Lippmann engages in war-related government service, taking an unofficial hiatus from his editorial position at the *New Republic*.

1946: Former Vice President Henry A. Wallace becomes editor of the *New Republic* but is asked to resign due to his leftist political stance.

1980s: The *New Republic* becomes less liberal in political orientation, reflecting a range of political stances.

1990s: The *New Republic* continues to be a highly influential journal of political commentary.

1919: The League of Nations is established as part of the Treaty of Versailles. The League of Nations is an organization designed to promote "collective security" among the nations of the world. The world headquarters are established in Geneva, Switzerland. The United States, however, never joins the League of Nations.

1940s: During World War II, the League of Nations has no power or influence over international conflicts and is dissolved. In 1946, the United Nations is established to replace the League of Nations. The United Nations includes the United States, and the world headquarters are located in New York City.

1990s: The dissolution of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War brings new challenges to the United Nations in mediating international conflicts as well as violent conflicts between ethnic groups within single nations.

What Do I Read Next?

In *Public Opinion* (1922), one of Lippmann's most influential works, he argues that the mass public is not capable of forming rational opinions on matters of national and international concern.

Essays in the Public Philosophy (1955) represents a culmination of Lippmann's political philosophy, in which he again asserts the need for authority based on rational thought as a moral compass in the modern world.

Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy (1978), by Mortimer J. Adler, provides a basic explanation of the central ideas of Aristotle, one of the sages whom Lippmann regards as a teacher of timeless wisdom.

George Santayana (1987), by John McCormick, is a biography of the modern philosopher who was one of Lippmann's teachers and primary influences.

Plato for Beginners (1990), by Robert J. Cavalier, presents an introduction to the central ideas of Plato, one of the sages whom Lippmann regards as a teacher of timeless wisdom.

The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors (1997) provides an updated translation, by E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, of the basic teachings of Confucius, one of the sages whom Lippmann regards as a teacher of timeless wisdom.

Spinoza: A Life (1999), by Steven M. Nadler, is a biography of the seventeenth century philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza, one of the sages whom Lippmann regards as a teacher of timeless wisdom.

A Simple Path: Basic Buddhist Teachings (2000), by the Dalai Lama, provides an introduction to the central ideas of Buddha, one of the sages whom Lippmann regards as a teacher of timeless wisdom.

Further Study

Adams, Larry L., "The New Morality," in *Walter Lippmann,* Twayne Publishers, 1977, pp. 123-147.

Adams discusses the philosophical, religious, and social underpinnings of Lippmann's work.

Auchincloss, Louis, *Woodrow Wilson,* Viking Penguin, 2000.

Woodrow Wilson is a biography of the progressive President Woodrow Wilson by whom Lippmann was recruited to develop international policy for peace in postwar Europe.

Cooper, John Milton Jr., *Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920,* W. W. Norton, 1990.

Pivotal Decades is a history of the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century, the period during which Lippmann's fundamental political philosophy was developed.

Diggins, John Patrick, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition: Walter Lippmann's Quest for Authority," in *A Preface to Morals,* by Walter Lippmann, Transaction Publishers, 1999, pp. ix□liii.

Diggins describes Lippmann's career as a writer and thinker, as well as factors that make his book an important contribution to American moral philosophy.

Diner, Steven J., *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era,* Hill & Wang, 1998.

A Very Different Age is a history of the United States during the Progressive era of the 1890s to 1920s.

Knock, Thomas J., *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for New World Order,* Oxford University Press, 1992.

To End All Wars provides a historical discussion of the efforts of President Wilson to formulate a program for international peace in the wake of World War I.

Lamont, Corliss, *The Philosophy of Humanism,* Continuum Press, 1990.

Philosophy of Humanism is an introduction to humanism, a moral philosophy that Lippmann advocates as the most appropriate replacement for religion in the age of modernity.

Reston, James, "Conclusion: The Mockingbird and Taxi-cab," in *Walter Lippmann and His Times,* edited by Marquis Childs and James Reston, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1959, pp. 226-238.

The book describes Lippmann's daily life and work habits, in part derived from the conclusions he drew in *A Preface to Morals*.

Riccio, Barry Daniel, *Walter Lippmann: Odyssey of a Liberal,* Transaction Press, 1994.

In *Walter Lippmann,* Riccio traces the development of Lippmann's liberal, humanist political philosophy over half a century of publication.

Wilson, Edmund, "Walter Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals,*" in *From the Uncollected Edmund Wilson,* edited by Janet Groth and David Castronovo, Ohio University Press, 1995, pp. 108-114.

This early review of Lippmann's book originally appeared in the *New Republic* in July of 1929.

Wolfe, Gregory, ed., *The New Religious Humanists: A Reader,* Free Press, 1997.

The New Religious Humanists is an overview of philosophies of religious humanism in the late twentieth century.

Zieger, Robert H., *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experiencee,* Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

America's Great War provides a history of United States participation in World War I.

Bibliography

Adams, Larry L., *Walter Lippmann,* Twayne Publishers, 1977, pp. 9-10.

Blum, D. Steven, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War*, Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 9-11,97.

Childs, Marquis, Introduction to *Walter Lippmann and His Times,* edited by Marquis Childs and James Reston, Har-court, Brace and Company, 1959, p. 2.

Dam, Hari N., *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann,* Gordon Press, 1973, pp. 161-162.

Diggins, John Patrick, Introduction to *A Preface to Morals,* by Walter Lippmann, Transaction Publishers, 1982, pp. x□xi, xiv, xiv, xxxv□xxxvi, xli.

Kirkhorn, Michael, *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Volume 29: *American Newspaper Journalists, 1926-1950,* edited by Perry J. Ashley, Gale Research, 1984, pp. 174-189.

Riccio, Barry D., *Walter Lippmann: Odyssey of a Liberal,* Transaction Publishers, 1994, p. xii.

Rossiter, Clinton, and James Lare, eds., *The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy,* Random House, 1963, pp. xi, xiii.

Steel, Ronald, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century,* Atlantic Monthly Press, 1980, pp. xiii-xvi, 263.

Weingast, David Elliott, *Walter Lippmann: A Study in Personal Journalism*, Rutgers University Press, 1949, pp. xiii, 125, 127, 130.

BOOKRAGS

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Nonfiction Classics for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

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

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

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

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

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

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

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

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) 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, NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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

NCfS 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 Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS series.

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

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

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

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS, 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 Nonfiction Classics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

Editor, Nonfiction Classics for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535