The Prince Study Guide

The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli

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".

Contents

Introduction

Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* is arguably the most popular book about politics ever written. Its observations about human behavior are as true today as they were five hundred years ago. In this book, Machiavelli offers advice to politicians regarding how to gain power and how to keep it.

Although modern readers think that a "prince" is someone who is destined to inherit control of his country, the princes of Machiavelli's time were by no means that secure: the prince had to be careful to keep the support of his citizens if he wanted to remain in power. The methods that Machiavelli suggests for leaders to keep public support are just as relevant for today's elected officials as they were for leaders of the sixteenth century.

Although *The Prince* is taught in many schools, there are few reputable teachers who would recommend actually following the advice that Machiavelli offers; it is meant to serve the prince's selfish interests, not to serve society in general. The ideas in the book are stated so harshly and bluntly that the term *Machiavellian* has now commonly used to describe the process of being cunning and ruthless in the pursuit of power.

Previous political writers, from Plato and Aristotle in ancient times to the sixteenth-century humanists, treated politics as a branch of the area of philosophy that dealt with morals. Machiavelli's chief innovation was to break with this long tradition and present the study of politics as political science.

Author Biography

Niccolo Machiavelli was born in Florence on May 3, 1469. He is notable for his essays on politics, particularly his infamous treatise on power entitled *The Prince.*

Not much is known about Machiavelli's early life except that he came from a political family. His father was a lawyer and represented Florentine nobles of high social standing. However, even with this privileged position, he had to struggle to make enough money to support his wife and sixteen children.

In 1494 Machiavelli became a clerk at the chancery at Adrian. In 1498 the ruling family of Florence was forced out of power and a republican government assumed control. Machiavelli became a secretary to the Council of Ten, which was the governing body in charge of diplomacy and military organization for the new Florentine republican government.

In his work for the executive council he had the opportunity to observe the workings of foreign affairs firsthand. In addition, he got to meet with other political leaders to see how their countries were ruled. He carried out several diplomatic missions to Germany, Spain, and other Italian city-states.

One of the political rulers he came to know was Cesare Borgia, of the powerful Borgia family; in fact. *Tire Prince* often refers to the Cesare Borgia as the model for an ideal ruler.

In 1512 the Medici family regained power in Florence, putting an end to republican rule. As a result, Machiavelli was forced out of his job and temporarily imprisoned. He returned to his country estate near San Casciano after his release and wrote several books on politics, including: *On the Art of War, History of Florence. Discourses on Livy,* and *The Prince,* which was dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici in an attempt to gain favor with the ruling family.

In 1527 the republic was restored, but Machiavelli was not appointed to his old position because many in the new government felt that he was too closely associated with the Medici family. Machiavelli died later that same year. His most famous work. *The Prince,* was published in 1532□five years after his death.

Plot Summary

Dedicatory Letter

The cover letter that opens *The Prince* is addressed to Lorenzo de Medici, a member of the ruling family in Florence. The letter introduces the book as an attempt to gain Lorenzo's favor, referring to the work as "a gift" and promising to show him—through examples of how powerful men have behaved throughout history—the most proven way to govern his people.

Much of language of the "Dedicatory Letter" is meant to assure the prince that Machiavelli is indeed humble; he wants the prince to benefit from his experience while at the same time avoiding the appearance that he knows more than him. These two ideas are contradictory, and so Machiavelli makes a point of downplaying his own qualifications. Historically, this has been read as an attempt to secure a job within Medici's government, although the letter itself emphasizes the point that he was trying to be helpful with no personal gain.

Chapters 1-11

Although there are no formal divisions between the twenty-six chapters that comprise *The Prince,* it is easy to see that Machiavelli's work has been arranged in four distinct sections. The first eleven chapters discuss the various kinds of principalities that are possible, introducing readers to the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

The beginning of this section of the book starts with discussions of contemporary Italian politics, a subject that will be dropped by the end of this section. Machiavelli looks at examples from antiquity, which is meant to underscore the scholarly aspect of *The Prince.*

One of the central themes of the book is that a ruler should never leave anything to chance: rulers cannot rely on fate or on the support of others, for it will usually end up proving unreliable. Machiavelli then explores possible ways for a prince to come to power.

Chapters 12-14

In this section, Machiavelli discusses ways for a political leader to organize his military—the most important function of a ruler. First, he examines the use of mercenary soldiers—men who are hired to fight, usually from a different country—and explores the problems with this method. For instance, he contends that history shows that mercenaries are motivated only by money; therefore, if there is a disruption in payment, the mercenaries will not fight. Also, soldiers from other countries might lack the nationalistic fervor to fight hard for a certain cause or ruler.

Moreover, he offers direct, specific advice for how political leaders should handle their armies. They should, for instance, always have an enemy. He recommends that steps be taken so that the soldiers do not get bored, for then they will get themselves into trouble.

Chapters 15-23

Like the first section of the book, the third spans the length of several chapters. The focus in this section is the prince's subordinates and associates.

It is in this section that the book's famous rejection of conventional morality can be found. Machiavelli proposes the idea that one who is a leader does not need to return loyalty with loyalty; the only thing the prince owes his subjects is military success.

If the rest of the book functions as a textbook, teaching old stories and traditional wisdom to young rulers who are curious about rulers from the past, this third section functions as a political tract, suggesting changes that need to come about if the prince is to rule effectively.

The first half of this section examines examples from history, while the second half emphasizes the present and the future

Chapters 24-26

This final section has been viewed as a patriotic call to arms, as Machiavelli encourages the prince to take good care of Italy, act prudently, and leave nothing about his country or his subjects to chance

As with the second section, the rhetoric rises throughout the course of these few chapters. The book ends as it began: examining contemporary Italy, leaving examples from history in the past.

Prologue

Prologue Summary

Machiavelli was removed from his post as chancellery of Florence when his side lost a war and the Medici family came back to power. This book is addressed to Prince Lorenzo De Medici in an effort to show his loyalty. Machiavelli is trying to show that he can be of some use to the rulers of Florence. He points to his practical experience with power and politics.

The Prince opens with a dedication to the Prince Lorenzo De Medici. Machiavelli offers the Prince his most prized possession, his knowledge. Specifically, he is offering his knowledge of great men and their actions. He presents his book as a mark of his duty to the Medici family in general and Prince Lorenzo in particular.

There are three main reasons why the prince should read Machiavelli's book. First of all, the prince will appreciate the chance to learn a lifetime's worth of experience in a short amount of time. Secondly, the book is free of flattering flourishes. Machiavelli wants the prince to see the logic of the arguments without letting flattery cloud his judgment. Machiavelli's work should stand or fall on its own quality.

Prince Lorenzo might think that Machiavelli is trying to get above his station by writing this book. Lorenzo shouldn't be annoyed that an educated but low-born person thinks he can tell the Prince what to do. It is easier to see the mountains when you are looking up at them instead of standing on them.

Machiavelli has a lifetime of experience looking up at men of power, and he offers this experience to the Prince. He hopes that Lorenzo will accept his gift in the spirit in which it is offered. Machiavelli ends his dedication with a request for a favor from the Prince.

Prologue Analysis

There is an undercurrent of dignified desperation in Machiavelli's prologue. His banishment from power left him in virtual poverty. The first sentence of the prologue bluntly states that Machiavelli is looking for a favor from Lorenzo. Machiavelli wants to get on the Prince's good side. He says that his fondest wish is that the Prince will gain even more power and respect. The implication is that Lorenzo is sure to come to a good end if he has Machiavelli's counsel to guide him. Success is held out like a bribe. All Lorenzo has to do is reach out and change Machiavelli's hard circumstances.

The rest of the book is, essentially, a showcase of the kind of knowledge Machiavelli can bring to the Medici family if he is brought back to the center of power.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

There are two types of government, the state and the dominion. The dominion can be broken down into two types, those that are newly acquired and those that are inherited.

New dominions can be broken down into two smaller categories, based on their former style of government. Either the people are accustomed to living under a dominion or they aren't. The rulers of new dominions are also categorized. They either gained their new territory by fortune or ability.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 begins with a summary of how people hold power over groups of people. He starts with some definitions of how power is acquired. This sets the scene for the discussion ahead. Lorenzo now knows that Machiavelli is going to speak about the way people gain political and personal power. Lorenzo can stop wondering what Machiavelli's book is all about.

Two very important terms are introduced at the very end of the chapter. They are "fortune" and "ability." These terms are very important to the Renaissance Italian. People in the Middle Ages saw all actions as part of God's great cosmic plan. If something bad happens to a person, they are probably being punished for sins they committed.

The Renaissance person sees things a little differently. Fortune doesn't really mean "luck" in this case. A closer definition would be "circumstances." Fortune includes all of the events that happen to someone. They can be either good or bad. Bad fortune doesn't mean God hates that person. What happens to people isn't linked to how morally good they are. Fortune just "is," and it can be changed.

It is one's innate ability that can change fortune. "Ability," in this case, refers to all of the resources one has inside. These include intelligence, wit, courage, and determination. It doesn't matter if a person has good fortune or bad fortune. If one is intelligent, quick-witted, decisive, and courageous, one can turn anything to advantage. God and morality have nothing to do with it.

Machiavelli is taking God out of the politics and power equation during a time when the Catholic Church still appoints Emperors. This new viewpoint is the foundation on which this highly controversial book is based.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Machiavelli will deal with dominions alone since he discusses republics in another work. Specifically, he will discuss how to govern and keep the dominion.

Hereditary dominions are the easiest to keep. The people are accustomed to the family that rules them. As long as the prince can handle unforeseen events and has no vices, he will most likely keep his power. If someone takes his dominion away from him, the prince can take it back at the slightest weakness from the conqueror.

Machiavelli lists rulers who keep their rule largely because their people are in the habit of being ruled by them. People love what is familiar. As long as a prince does what has always been done, he will be regarded with affection.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Machiavelli begins by discussing the psychology of the governed. People, he says, like what is familiar. They do not necessarily care whether a ruler is brilliant. They just want one day to be somewhat the same as the day before. As long as a hereditary ruler can accomplish this, and has no outstanding bad habits, the people will be peaceable.

This is a startling conclusion. Most commentators would suggest that people are happiest if their rulers are good, caring, or at least, appointed by God. Machiavelli suggests that this doesn't matter. Machiavelli makes the case that morality has nothing to do with a successful ruler. The key is consistency. Inertia and habit will take care of the rest.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

New territories are harder to govern than hereditary territories or principalities. Men think that they will improve their circumstances if they change rulers, but this is rarely the case. The new ruler must conquer. Thus, he will make enemies with everyone in his new territory. Those that didn't want him there will hate him, and he will not live up to the expectations of those that invited him into their state.

A new territory is easier to keep if it shares a similar language or is in the same region as a conqueror's hereditary dominion. This is even truer if the territory is accustomed to being ruled. All one has to do is kill off the old ruling line and keep all the laws the same.

When one conquers people who do not share one's language or customs, the ruler must be very adept at ruling. The best solution is if he lives in the new territory, so that he can manage problems when they are still small. The people will also feel that they can go to him for justice. This will give the good more reason to love him and the rebellious more reason to fear him.

Establishing a colony is the next best solution. Colonies are loyal and don't cost very much. They will only annoy the people whose lands they take. These will be no trouble because they are now homeless and poor. "Men must either be pampered or annihilated." If you must cause harm, make sure the people harmed can't take revenge.

The prince who rules a territory or state outside his sphere of influence should lead and defend the weaker states around him and seek to weaken the stronger states. As long as he keeps everyone around him weak, he will rule the whole province. In this way a prince manages present problems and plans for future ones as well. Problems that are recognized early are easier to cure.

The Romans never allowed problems to persist in order to avoid war. Wars cannot be avoided, and doing so only aids the other side. They used their strength and prudence to choose their moment.

Let us consider the actions of France. King Louis came into Italy through the Venetians, who wanted half of Lombardy. He then became the master of a third of Italy. The King could have kept his influence if he had followed the outline above - namely, keeping the states around him weak. Instead, King Louis helped the Church acquire power in Romagna, which alienated some of his supporters. He then divided Naples with the King of Spain. This removed a King that could have been King Louis' vassal and replaced him with someone who could topple the King of France himself.

If France could have taken Naples alone, it should have done so. If it could not, the King should not have divided it with someone else. Thus, King Louis made five mistakes: He

eliminated the weaker states, he strengthened a strong rival, he brought in a foreign power, he didn't live in his new territory, and he didn't set up colonies.

King Louis could have survived these errors if he hadn't made a sixth. He allowed Venice to fall to ruin. Venice could have kept rival powers out of Lombardy. No one would have dared to attack both of them at the same time. King Louise lost Lombardy because he failed to observe any of the rules listed above. Based on this, one may formulate a rule that states, "He who makes another powerful causes his own failure."

Chapter 3 Analysis

Machiavelli discusses why people under one ruler will overthrow their old ruler for another, and then switch back again. Machiavelli then sets forth a plan for keeping conquered territories. For lands that share the ruler's language and customs, all one needs to do is kill off the former rulers. If the prince leaves the old ways of managing the territory in place, the people will be quiet.

Comments like these gave Machiavelli the reputation of a cold-hearted, power-hungry person. But Machiavelli isn't worried about morality. In his mind, morality has nothing to do with ruling a principality in an efficient manner. One rules efficiently when the conquered territory makes money instead of spending it, and when the populace is quiet.

One can argue that Machiavelli's suggestions actually save lives. He is speaking here about a prince who is invited into a new territory. The advice Machiavelli gives is designed to hand the prince power over an entire area in a bloodless manner. If one follows a certain set of rules, a prince can occupy a region almost purely through political maneuvering.

Few feel comfortable with Machiavelli's matter-of-fact way of speaking about acquiring and keeping power, but one must admit that there is a lot of logic behind what he says. Excessive killing and chaos should be avoided by taking a strong hand at the beginning. Machiavelli is simply giving the ambitious prince a way to do so as he acquires power and influence.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

One may wonder how Alexander the Great's successors kept Darius' Asiatic lands after Alexander's death. The answer lies in how it was ruled. There are two ways to rule a territory. Either the prince rules alone, using his servants as ministers, or the prince uses barons who rule by right of inheritance. The prince who rules through his servants has great authority because the people will only recognize him as ruler. This is how the Kingdom of Turkey is governed.

A prince who rules through barons has less authority because he cannot deprive his nobles of their titles or privileges without some risk to himself. The people who serve the barons feel a natural affection for them and regard them as their rightful lords. This is how the Kingdom of France is ruled.

One will note that while the Kingdom of Turkey would be difficult to conquer, it would be quite easy to keep. It would be hard to conquer because the Turk's servants would be very loyal to him. Even if you could corrupt a servant, he or she wouldn't be able to lead the people in a revolt. Anyone who attacks the Turk would find the people united against him. On the other hand, if one could defeat the Turkish army in battle, it would be easy to keep the country from that point on. All one would have to do is kill off the royal family. No one else would have standing with the people, and so there would be no one who could lead an uprising.

The circumstances are reversed for the ruler who uses barons or nobles to rule his territory. The country would be easier to occupy, but much harder to hold. All one would have to do to occupy a land like France is to cultivate one or two nobles who are dissatisfied with the King's rule. Keeping what one wins is another matter. Killing off the royal family will not stop future rebellions because the people of the land have many different nobles to rally around.

Darius' government is like that of the Turks. Alexander had to completely defeat his army in battle, and then kill him and his family. Once Alexander did that, the Asiatic lands were his. Any rebellion that happened after that point came about because Alexander's successors fought amongst themselves. It is much harder to keep lands organized like France. As long as the memory of what they used to have remains, the people will fight against their conqueror. That is why the Romans had so much trouble in France, Spain, and Greece.

With this in mind, no one should marvel that Alexander kept Darius' kingdom quite easily, or that the Romans had trouble with their conquests. This doesn't mean that Alexander and his successors governed better. The difference lies not in their ability as rulers. They simply had a territory that was easier to keep once conquered.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In previous chapters, Machiavelli organizes conquered territories into groups based on how easy they are to govern. Ruling one's hereditary possession is easier than ruling people who are accustomed to being free. Ruling people who share your culture and language is easier than ruling those who are different. Machiavelli now discusses how a government's structure affects how easy a territory is to conquer and keep.

The ambitious prince should know what type of ruling structure his rivals use in their dominions. There are two types. Each type of rule has its strengths and weaknesses. A prince needs to know what these are in order to conquer the land. What will work in one type of territory will not work in another.

There is a reason why this is the case. It has to do with where the people's personal loyalty and affection lie. If they all look to one man, they are leaderless when he is gone. If they look to many different men, when one noble is killed, his people can transfer their loyalty to another man who has the hereditary right to rule. The people have options. Knowing this information ahead of time will help a prince achieve his goals, because he can plan for the territory's reaction to his conquest.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

There are three ways to keep a state that is accustomed to ruling itself. The first way is to destroy its civil and political structure. The second is to go live there. The third is to set up a puppet government and let the land rule itself.

There are many examples of rulers who lost territories when they tried to set up a conqueror-friendly puppet government. Usually the people in the government will be very loyal because they know they will not survive without the support of the prince who put them there. They will also have an easier time ruling than the conqueror would. It is much easier for a state of formerly free people to be controlled by their own citizens.

The surest way to keep a conquered state is to destroy it. Anyone who becomes the ruler of a formerly free state will be destroyed by it if he does not destroy its civil and political structure first. States do not forget their earlier freedom. They will use it as an excuse to rebel at every opportunity. People cannot start a rebellion once they are divided up or dispersed.

It is one thing to acquire a land whose ruling family has become extinct. Such people are accustomed to obeying a ruler. They will not agree on who their new ruler should be, and they will be totally unable to live in freedom. A prince may come in and take advantage of the situation relatively easy and be confident of keeping them. A state or republic, on the other hand, will hate the conqueror and do everything in its power to topple him. The only solution is for the ruler to either destroy the state or live with it.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Machiavelli has moved to new acquisitions that used to be states or republics. He says that there are three ways of keeping it, but that isn't necessarily true. It would be more accurate to say that there is the best way of ruling a formerly free state, the second best way, and the wrong way.

Machiavelli lists destroying the state's civil and political structure as the best way. He is correct, if one's first consideration is a stable government. One wants the people to have no other option than the new ruler. Destroying the infrastructure is the same as eliminating the royal family in a Turkish-style government. One eliminates a focal point for rebellion.

The second option is to set up a government that is composed of citizens of the state, but is friendly to the new ruler. The citizens will be easier to control because outwardly they are still governed by fellow citizens. Machiavelli doesn't come out and say that this form of governing is wrong. He lets examples from history do that for him. The point is driven home more effectively that way.

The third way to rule a state accustomed to freedom is to go live there in person. The advantages of this approach were covered in detail in an earlier chapter. Destroying the state is the surest way to keep the new territory, but occupying it will work as well.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Do not be surprised if the following discussion uses a lot of outstanding examples. A smart man will always try to imitate the actions of those that succeeded in life. Even if he isn't as smart as the men he imitates, he will still gain a measure of their success. He is like an archer who, knowing he can't hit the first target, aims for one more ambitious in an effort to hit the first.

The amount of trouble a new prince has in a newly acquired territory depends on his degree of ability. One can assume that, since he rose from a private citizen to a prince, he has some measure of talent or good fortune. Either of these will help lessen the difficulties he may experience. The prince that relies the least upon favorable circumstances has the most chance of succeeding. The new prince's difficulties will also be lessened by the fact that he must live in his new dominion since he has no other.

Men like Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, etc. all became princes through talent instead of fortune. Moses was merely the executor of God's will, but there was something in him, some ability that made him worthy to speak with God. As for the rest, none of their successes had anything to do with fortune. It may have given them the opportunity, but it was their own talent that let them do so much. Without the opportunity, their talents would be wasted. Without their talents, the opportunity would never have lead to anything.

Moses needed to find his people enslaved to the Egyptians, and Romulous needed to be exposed at birth. Cyrus needed to find the Persians dissatisfied with their lot. Theseus needed to find the Athenians scattered. These opportunities gave these men the chance they needed to prove themselves. Their great abilities allowed them to recognize these events for the opportunities they were. As a result, they and their countries rose to greatness.

Princes who gain power through their talents acquire dominions with difficulty, but hold on to them with ease. The difficulties come from the new mode of government the prince must put in place. There is nothing more difficult to plan or dangerous to set up. All those who profited from the old system will attack with passion. Those that might profit from the new system will defend passively, because they haven't been convinced that the new system will give them anything concrete.

One must consider whether such innovators stand alone or depend on the aid of others. Those that depend on others ultimately fail, and those that can use force succeed. People are changeable, and convincing them is the easy part. It is holding them to the new conviction that is difficult. Thus, one has to be ready to force them when they stop believing.

Neither Cyrus, Moses, Theseus, nor Romulus would have been obeyed for long if they hadn't been armed. Fra' Girolamo Savonarola failed for this reason. Dangers arise on any path to power, and it is up to the prince to use his resourcefulness to overcome them. Once they have done so, the prince who rules through ability will be honored, powerful, and secure in his rule.

One last example is worth noting. Hiero of Syracuse went from private citizen to king on the basis of his ability. His opportunity came when the oppressed Syracusans elected him their captain. He destroyed the militia, abandoned old alliances, and forged new ones. Hiero earned his kingship with hard work, but once he obtained it, his rule was secure.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Machiavelli uses examples from history to discuss how a prince may successfully gain power. If a prince isn't as brilliant as the great men mentioned, he can at least borrow some of their greatness by imitating their actions. Thus, even a prince of mediocre ability can succeed.

Having said that, Machiavelli goes on to discuss why having talent and ability is better. The ambitious would-be ruler will have less trouble ruling, for one thing. The discerning reader will notice that Machiavelli prizes innate ability over favorable circumstances. He uses examples from history to show why a prince who relies on his inner qualities will more often succeed than one who depends on favorable circumstances or fortune.

Success is shown to be a dance between talent and opportunity. Although fortune plays a small role by presenting the opportunity to be great, it is up to a person's innate ability to recognize the situation and act on it that separates the private citizen from the powerful ruler. Without opportunity, the talents of such men are wasted. Without the talent, the man cannot act on the opportunity. To a man with talent, bad fortune can be turned into an opportunity. Romulus was left to die at birth, and Moses had to leave Egypt when he killed someone. One needs the opportunity, but it is the ability or talent that is the most important.

For the talented would-be prince, the hard part is acquiring the territory to rule. Once that is accomplished, his subjects will admire him for his qualities. This is a very Renaissance view. The ruler doesn't rule because God wants it that way. He rules because his actions have proved that he has a right to do so. His subjects bow not out of duty, but out of a just fear and admiration. Thus, his rule is long and secure.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Those who get to rule over a territory through good fortune gain their rulership easily, but only keep it through hard work. They may gain their new state either in exchange for money, as a favor, or by bribing the military. Their troubles begin once they start ruling. This type of prince depends entirely on the good will and good fortune of the one who put him in power. They don't know how to command, and they don't have loyal forces at their disposal. Unless such a prince can learn quickly, his dominion will wither in the first crisis.

There are two good examples of the two ways of rising from private citizen to powerful prince. Francesco Sforza rose from his private station to be the Duke of Milan purely through his own ability. He had to exert himself to gain it, but thereafter kept it with ease. Cesare Borgia, on the other hand, gained his command through the influence of his father. He lost it the same way, despite all he did to keep it. Cesare Borgia did all he could to secure his future power, but his dominion was too new when fortune frowned on him, and he lost. Even so, the history of his rule is worth discussing.

Alexander VI wished to make his son great. Unfortunately, all the territories that the Pope might have bestowed on Cesare were controlled by his enemies. Alexander decided that the only way to secure territory for his son was to stir up the Italian states, and then acquire some territory for his son in the confusion. At the same time, Louis the King of France reentered Italy. The Pope granted Louis a divorce and, in exchange, King Louis gave the Pope the help he needed to acquire Romagna for his son Cesare.

Cesare did not trust the Orsini or Colonna mercenary forces he had at his disposal, and he didn't trust the King of France. Cesare rid himself of the Colonna leaders, and then secured the loyalty of the less powerful members. He put down an Orsini conspiracy, killing anyone powerful enough to cause him further trouble. Then Cesare installed a cruel, resolute man named Messer Remirro as minister of Romagna. Remirro's tactics were harsh but effective. The people hated him. When the man's tactics were no longer necessary, Cesare had him killed. This made his subjects grateful to him for getting rid of such a cruel man.

After securing his borders within and without, Cesare turned his attention to the King of France. King Louis, realizing that he set up a man who could overthrow him, tried to block any further conquests. Cesare searched for new allies. He did not give King Louis much support in his campaign in Napels. Then Pope Alexander died.

Cesare had to think about the possibility that the new Pope would try to take Romagna away from him. He had a four part strategy to keep himself in power. Cesare would kill off the families of all of his enemies so that they could not be used against him. Second, he would become allies with the noblemen of Rome. Third, he would win over as many

members of the College of Cardinals as possible. Fourth, he would gather enough power to resist any attack from the new Pope. Unfortunately, he became sick just as his father lay dying. If he would have had a little more time to acquire more territory, and had been in good health, he could have ruled under his own power.

Though fortune did not smile upon Cesare, he was a fine example for any prince who has his dominion handed to him. He only made one mistake: he let a Cardinal he injured become the Pope. He had the power to veto any Pope he didn't want in power, but did not use it. Anyone who believes that new favors will make friends out of an enemy deceives himself.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 6 discusses how a private citizen may become a prince through sheer ability when the opportunity presents itself. In this chapter, he discusses the trials and tribulations that come when a prince has his dominion handed to him. One would think that Machiavelli wouldn't care for people who are given their power, but hat is not the case. In this chapter, Machiavelli introduces Cesare Borgia, the prince he thinks all other princes should imitate.

It is useful to have an example of the type of Prince Machiavelli considers ideal. Cesare may have been given his power, but he exerted a lot of energy to keep what he was given. Cesare followed the tenants Machiavelli laid out in earlier chapters. He weakened strong rivals and defended weak allies without allowing them to become stronger. He did this by killing off the Colonna and Orsini ringleaders and co-opting their less powerful members. Cesare did his best to kill off anyone that might want revenge against him. Lastly, he put together a force that would be loyal only to him.

Cesare's actions showed shrewdness. He understood how people work. Minister Remirro is a prime example. Someone had to come in and restore order to Romagna. The conditions in that state required harsh measures. Cesare could have taken those measures himself. Instead, he appointed someone else to do it so that his people didn't focus all of their dislike in his direction. Then, when order was restored, he had the man killed. He could blame all of the harsh measures on his minister, and at the same time enjoy his subjects' gratitude.

Most people would say that Cesare's actions were terrible. He used his mercenary troops for as long as he could, and then killed anyone who could have harmed him. He let someone else make the difficult decisions, and then used him as a scapegoat. Remember, though, that Machiavelli is focusing on efficiency, not morality. Cesare did everything in his power to continue as the ruler of Romagna. Along the way, he also stabilized a state that suffered from lawlessness. According to Machiavelli's new code, he was a very good prince.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

There are two other ways for a man to become a prince. In the first, a person rises to power by wicked actions. In the second, a man becomes a ruler through the consent of the people. The first way will be illustrated with two examples.

Agathocles of Sicily was the son of a potter. Though wicked, he is full of such talent and ability that he rose rapidly to commander of the military. One day he gathered all of the senate and citizens of Syracuse together as if he had something important to tell them. At his signal, his soldiers killed the members of the senate and the leading citizens. He made himself Lord of Syracuse, successfully resisting anyone who tried to take his power away from him.

Anyone who examines Agathocles life will realize that it was his ability, not his fortune, that put him in his position of power. Still, one cannot say that killing one's fellow citizens, betraying their trust, and acting without mercy are good things. One may win power but not glory with these tactics. Agathocles' boldness marked him as an equal to any outstanding captain. His cruelty, however, prevented him from taking his position alongside other men of excellence. His accomplishment lacked virtue.

Oliverotto da Fermo is the second example. He was an orphan, raised by his maternal uncle Giovanni Fogliani. Oliverotto also showed aptitude in the military, and soon became the commander's chief officer. This, however, was not enough for Fogliani. He decided to take the city of Fermo. To this end, he wrote a letter to his uncle asking to visit his native city with a few friends and servants.

Once there, Oliverotto invited all of the leading citizens of Fermo to dinner. He killed all of them, including his uncle, after dinner. Then he set himself up at the head of the local government. He would never have been killed if Cesare Borgia hadn't tricked him into coming to his own dinner party in Senigallia, where Cesare Borgia has him strangled.

Some may wonder how men like Agathocles and Oliverotto could remain secure for so long despite all their acts of cruelty. Other men use cruelty, but cannot keep their dominion even during times of peace, let alone during a war. The answer is that there is a proper and improper use of cruelty. One cannot call the use of cruelty good. It can be used properly, however, if one only uses it in order to remain safe. One uses it rarely, or only once, and quickly replaces such actions with measures that help one's people. One may then do better later. If the frequency starts to increase, one is using cruelty improperly. Such a man will not remain in power.

If a private citizen is going to seize power, it's best if he thinks through all of the injuries he is going to cause, and cause them all at once. Then he will not have to repeat himself and his citizens will begin to feel safe with him. They will arouse less

resentment. Benefits should be handed out little by little so they can be savored more. A prince should treat his subjects in such a way that he will never be forced to change his conduct. Punishments made during a crisis are not useful. The good one does during this time is also useless. It will seem forced from the circumstances, and no one will feel grateful.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Machiavelli discusses how one can acquire and keep power through "wicked" actions. One may be surprised by such terminology. This is the man who is seeking to divorce morality from politics, after all. Still, he acknowledges that there are less than optimal ways to become a prince. A prince should do what is efficient. He should acknowledge, though, that some of his actions may not lead him to glory.

Machiavelli mentions this third way to power as the method of last resort. It is not a good way. It is not even the best way. Remember, though, that this is a book about how to get and keep power. If he left this alternative out, the book would be incomplete.

Machiavelli's two examples have some things in common. Both Agathocles and Oliverotto knew what they wanted and planed out how to get it. In both cases they collected all of their potential rivals in one place and killed them. Then they immediately took over the local power structure using forces loyal to them. Both rulers took only as much as they could comfortably control. This follows Machiavelli's advice for how to handle a newly acquired dominion.

Both Agathocles and Oliverotto also understood the proper use of cruelty. It should never be used thoughtlessly. A ruler who employs cruel tactics to get into power can be forgiven if he then switches to methods that benefit his people. A ruler who uses it too often will always have to be wary of assassination.

Machiavelli uses these two examples to show how the principals he laid out in earlier chapters work in real world situations. Each example is a progression of the one before. Each shows how decisive action in the beginning of one's rule will lead to power and security throughout the rest of it. Fortune may sometimes cause one to fail, but the shrewd prince will do everything in his power to tip fortune's scales in his favor.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

We now turn to the fourth way one gains power. A private citizen may become a ruler through the aid of his fellow citizens. The ruling structure can be called a civil principality. The citizen doesn't have to be particularly talented or fortunate to acquire power in this way, only cunning. There are two groups that can put the ruler into power, either the commoners or the nobles. The commoners do not wish to be commanded or oppressed by the nobles. The nobles wish to command and oppress. This tension leads to one of three states; principality, republic, or anarchy.

A principality comes about when either the nobles or the commoners have the opportunity. A man who is appointed as prince by the nobles will have a difficult time staying in power. This is because the nobles will believe that they are his equal. They are less likely to obey him. The prince who is appointed by the people will stand alone. He is more likely to be surrounded by people who will be disposed to obey him.

It is impossible to satisfy nobles without injuring others, since they wish to oppress. On the other hand, one can satisfy the commoners because all they wish is to not be oppressed. A prince can never be secure against a hostile population because there are a lot of them. He can be secure against the nobility because they are few. Nobles will always look to their own interests and support a winner. The prince must take the people as he finds them. He can, however, do without the nobility, since he can make or unmake them at need.

Nobles can be sorted into two categories. The first type will join their fortune with the ruler. The other type will hold back. A prince should honor those that join with him if they aren't greedy. The second type should be dealt with in one of two ways. If the noble holds back because of fear or timidity, they can be used. These are the ones who will bring honor during times of peace. During war they will not turn against the ruler. If the noble holds back because he has his own ambitions, the prince must be wary. The nobles will turn on him when times are difficult.

The prince who comes to power with the help of the people should seek to keep their goodwill. This is easy, because all they want is to not be oppressed. A ruler who comes to power with the help of the nobles should also seek the goodwill of the people. He will win their loyalty more rapidly than the man appointed by the people, because he gave them good when they expected only bad from him.

The goodwill of the people is vital to any prince. He will be able to withstand attacks from the outside more easily. That proverb, "He who builds on the people builds on mud" doesn't apply to princes. If a prince is quick witted and able to command, the people will follow him.

This type of principality runs into difficulties when its civic structure is replaced by rule through a group of magistrates. The prince is then dependent on the citizens he elevated. These can easily deprive him of power either by opposing him or by not obeying his orders. The people will not be accustomed to taking his orders directly, so he may not be able to move fast enough during a crisis. There will also be fewer men he can trust. The people may be ready to die for him when the risk of death is unlikely. When trouble comes, few will actually keep their promises. A wise prince then organizes things so that the people always need him. Then they will always be loyal.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Machiavelli begins by explaining how a civil principality gets its start. Either the commoners appoint one of their people, or the nobles do so. It all depends on who has the first opportunity. Neither group appoints a prince because they want to be ruled by anyone in particular. They appoint a prince because they want protection from the other group. This is a very important distinction, and one a prince should not forget. He is in his position because one or the other group thinks he will serve their interests.

Machiavelli then speaks on the unique problems that plague a prince who has been appointed by the people. He breaks this category down according to who appointed the prince. If the nobles appointed one of their own people to the position, the prince will have a more difficult time keeping his power. The nobles will view themselves as his equal. On the other hand, if the prince has the goodwill of the people, he can do away with the nobles who are causing trouble.

Once again, Machiavelli makes the case that the goodwill of the people is the important thing. As he discussed in an earlier chapter, a prince needs the goodwill of the people if he wishes to keep territory he has conquered. Now he is saying that one needs the goodwill of the people in order to keep the nobles in check. The needs of the people are simpler and more easily filled. Nobles, on the other hand, will always be looking to their own interests first.

This doesn't mean that he can blindly trust the common people. They will support him if he is a quick thinker during difficult times and knows how to command. They also must know that they need him during good times and bad. The smart prince will therefore cultivate the goodwill of the people, thus ensuring that they always need him. Simply keeping them happy is not enough.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The strength of a principality and its ruler can be measured by whether they can afford to put an army in the field. If a prince cannot engage his enemy in open battle, he will always be dependent on others. In this case, the prince should provision and fortify his city. He should let the countryside look out for its own interests. If the prince does this, and keeps the goodwill of his people, others will be reluctant to attack him.

The cities of Germany enjoy great freedom. Their cities are so well fortified that it would be hard to take them. There is enough food and drink inside their walls to feed the citizens for a year. They have enough work to last for a year. They also have the means to defend themselves. A prince in possession of a city like this is not in danger of attack. However, if he is attacked, the attacker will soon leave in disgrace. An opponent cannot afford to lay siege to a city for a year.

Some might suggest that the citizens will lose patience with their prince once they see their lands outside the wall burned and looted. A prince has ways of dealing with this. He can alternate between saying that the siege will soon be over and scaring his citizens with stories of the enemy's cruelty. One would assume that most of the burning and looting would happen in the beginning, when everyone is still united with the prince anyway. Once this has happened, the citizens will be even more bound to the prince because they will believe he is obligated to them. Men feel just as bound to those for whom they do favors as to those who give favors. As long as the prince has enough food and a way to defend the city, it will be easy for him to maintain his citizen's determination.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In each of the preceding chapters, Machiavelli has made the case that a prince should be able to stand alone. Relying on others is a bad idea. He further states in this chapter that the single most important characteristic of a prince who can stand alone is his ability to either keep or buy the services of an army. In this way he can defend himself from attack.

Machiavelli recognizes that a prince can not always afford an army. The advice he gives should be seen as what one can do when the first option won't work. He gives the example of Germany. Notice that the Germans do not rely on anyone else to protect them. They use the resources they have to keep themselves safe. As such, they are not at the mercy of anyone else. The Germans are in a strong position, not because they are stronger than their neighbors, but because they have made themselves too difficult to bother with.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Of all the different types of principalities, only the Ecclesiastical is left to discuss. All of the problems a prince will have with this type of territory are limited to the time leading up to their acquisition. This is the only type of dominion that may be kept without talent or fortune. It does not matter how well a prince rules them. Ecclesiastical provinces alone can be held without defending them. Their people will not revolt even if they are ungoverned. They are held to the prince by religion. These states alone are secure and happy.

Ecclesiastical provinces are held and exalted by God. It would be rash and presumptuous to discuss them. Still, it may be useful to discuss the reasons why the Church gained so much power in Italy when the rulers did not respect it. The major causes of such a change will be presented here.

Before Charles VIII of France came to Italy, Italy was ruled by the Pope, the Venetians, the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and the Florentines. They had two main objectives. The first was to keep foreign armies out of Italy, and the second was to keep each other from becoming more powerful. The Venetians and the Pope were viewed with the most suspicion. Thus, to keep the Venetians in check, all the others formed an alliance. The barons of Rome were used to keeping the Popes in check. The Colonna and the Orsini fought amongst themselves and with the Pope. This kept the Pope busy enough to neutralize any further ambitions to power.

Then Alexander VI entered the scene and showed what a Pope with money and troops can do. His exploits are mentioned in Chapter 8. Alexander wanted to raise his son, not give more power to the Church. However, his actions made the Church more powerful, since it kept Romagna when Alexander died and Duke Cesare Borgia was removed from office. Thanks to Cesare Borgia, Colonna and Orsini, the barons of Rome, were too weak to distract the Papacy from its ambitions. The next Pope built on this foundation, selling ecclesiastical offices and annexing land. Pope Julius conquered Bologna, defeated the Venetians, and drove the French out of Italy.

The Orsini and the Colonna will never be at peace while they number Cardinals among their followers. It is the cardinals who keep tensions high, so that the barons must defend themselves. Thus, from prelate ambitions come chaos and grief. At present Pope Leo finds the papacy very strong. Like his predecessors, it is hoped that he will continue to make the Church very great indeed.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Machiavelli does something very clever here. He wishes to discuss those principalities that are controlled by the Catholic Church. He has to be careful, because the Church is

very strong, and had a hand in putting the Medici family back in power in Florence. Under no circumstances does he wish to look as if he is dictating foreign policy or criticizing Church actions. Machiavelli goes out of his way to say that he will not discuss such matters because doing so would be an offense to God. What follows isn't a critique of the Church; it is simply a historical overview for the curious.

By redefining this chapter as a historical overview, Machiavelli can freely discuss Church actions and policies. He begins by saying that ecclesiastical principalities are the most secure and happy because they are held to their rulers by religion. The people will stay loyal no matter what the prince does. This can be seen as flattery, but it also happens to be true. One only has to examine history to see this is the case.

Then Machiavelli outlines the power structure before Charles VIII entered Italy. Here we see a country balanced by several powers. Each keeps the other from gaining too much influence. Then along comes Alexander VI, who upset the balance on behalf of his son. As one follows the discussion, the reader will notice that the Church gains power using the same rules Machiavelli sets down for a prince who gains his dominion through either ability or fortune. Though Machiavelli cannot come out and say it, even God's ministers on earth have to follow the same rules of conquest as everyone else.

Machiavelli then ends this chapter with a little more flattery for the present Pope. One cannot forget that this book on power has a second purpose. Machiavelli wants to be brought back into political affairs. The Pope Machiavelli is flattering is the uncle of the man to whom the book is dedicated, Lorenzo de Medici. While the book is dedicated to princes acquiring power, these little comments also show how a private citizen can work his way back into the circles of power.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The two most essential foundations for any state are sound laws and a sound military. Since the absence of a sound military means there is an absence of sound laws, we will speak only about military forces.

The troops a prince uses for defense may either be his own, mercenaries, or troops auxiliaries. Mercenaries and auxiliaries are dangerous. They only work for pay, and that is not enough to make them die for their prince. They are anxious to be his soldiers during times of peace. They will either desert or flee during times of war. No prince who relies on mercenaries or auxiliaries can be secure.

Italy's ruin is primarily due to the mercenaries it used. They may have been very bold when fighting each other but, when foreigners invaded Italy, they showed their true colors. When King Charles of France invaded, he did so with a piece of chalk. Whoever said that our sins were to blame for this defeat spoke true. The sins weren't the ones he spoke about, but rather the sins mentioned above.

Mercenary captains may or may not be skilled soldiers. If they are skilled they cannot be trusted. If they are not skillful, they will ruin a prince in any case. The control of troops should be in the hands of the prince or the republic. The prince should take personal charge and be the commander. In a republic, a citizen should be appointed to the post. Then laws should be put down that will keep him in his place.

A republic with troops of its own is less likely to be conquered than one that employs mercenaries. Rome and Sparta remained free for many centuries. The Swiss currently enjoy much freedom. On the other hand, after the Death of Duke Filippo, the Milanese hired Francesco Sforza to fight the Venetians. Sforza ended up siding with the Venetians and subdued his employers.

If the Venetians and Florentines have extended their territories by using mercenaries, it is because they have been lucky. Their mercenary captains were either unskilled, had some opposition to their plans for domination, or had their attention focused elsewhere. The Venetians went forward gloriously as long as they fought their wars themselves. Their fortune turned when they started using mercenaries. One captain had to be executed, and the other captains lost in one day what took the Venetians eight hundred years to gain. Gains with mercenary troops are always slow and weak, while losses are swift and crushing. Since Italy has been controlled by mercenaries for many years, we will discuss this subject more thoroughly.

Italy is now divided into many states controlled by the church and a few republics. Since neither the clergy nor the citizens know how to wage war, they hire others to do it for

them. The result is that Italy "has been overrun by Charles, plundered by Louis, ravished by Ferdinand, and dishonored by the Swiss."

Chapter 12 Analysis

Machiavelli emphasizes a theme that runs throughout *The Prince*. Namely, mercenaries ruin states. Troops should be controlled by the state, either in the person of the prince or by an appointed citizen of the republic. If the prince controls the troops, he does not have to fear being deposed. If a citizen controls the troops, there should be safeguards in place to keep him from taking over. One only has to look at the examples in Chapter 8 to see why this is so.

Whoever controls the troops controls the fate of the state. Giving control of the state to people who hold no loyalty to its survival is irresponsible. Mercenaries fight war in such a way as to avoid harm or hardship, not to make the state more powerful. They will turn on their employers as soon as it is more profitable to do so.

Whenever possible, mercenaries have a policy of taking prisoners instead of killing their fellow mercenaries in battle. They ignore effective but dirty work like digging ditches and attacking at night. This means that the strife in Italy never ends. No victory is decisive. Instead, each state pours more and more money into hiring mercenaries, thereby reducing themselves to poverty. One can see why a man who loves his state and country is set against the use of mercenaries.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Auxiliary forces are the other type of useless troop. They are the forces supplied by a foreign power when it is called upon to give aid. Such forces are trustworthy when pursuing their own interests. They are almost always a disaster to the one who borrows them, for if they lose he is ruined, and if they win he is their prisoner.

Pope Julius, noticing that his mercenaries were ineffective, borrowed troops from the King of Spain. He put himself at the mercy of foreigners. Fortunately, his auxiliaries were defeated and the Swiss came in and defeated the victors of the war. This is the only way he avoided becoming anyone's prisoner.

Anyone wishing to lose should use auxiliary troops. They are more dangerous than mercenaries. Ruin is assured. They are united and subject to another's orders. Mercenaries need more time and opportunity to move against the ruler that employed them. Auxiliaries do not.

Wise princes always shun auxiliary and mercenary troops. They have counted it better to lose with their own troops than win with another's. The example of Cesare Borgia is quite revealing. He began with French troops, exchanged these for mercenaries and, in the end, relied on his own forces. His reputation only increased when he stood in complete possession of his own forces.

Heiro of Syracuse likewise realized that the mercenary forces the Syracusans employed were worthless. He had them cut to pieces. When David went up against Goliath, the King offered David his own sword and armor. David instead chose to use his own knife because he could not do well with the King's weapons. In the end, the arms of another will weigh you down.

Charles VII of France recognized this and created native cavalry and infantry units that he used to clear the English out of France. Louis later abolished the infantry and began using Swiss troops. The French now believe they cannot win without them. French armies are of mixed composition. They are part mercenary and part native. This is better than using only mercenary troops, but inferior to a purely native force. If Charles' orders had been maintained, France would not presently be in peril.

The man who does not recognize problems from the beginning does not have wisdom. The Roman Empire began its fall once it started hiring mercenaries. No state can be secure unless it has its own armed forces, otherwise the state is at the mercy of fortune during adversity. One's own forces must be composed out of subjects, citizens, or dependents. Any other element is either mercenary or auxiliary. One only has to look at how Philip, father of Alexander the Great, and other rulers organized their troops to see how it should be done.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Having discussed the dangers of mercenary troops in the last chapter, Machiavelli turns his attention to auxiliary troops. These are more dangerous that mercenaries, because they are united under the rule of another. Mercenaries tend to ruin their employers. Auxiliary troops always do. Either they lose the battle and ruin the power who borrowed them, or they win and take over. They do not have the state's best interests in mind, and they are not controlled by the prince who borrowed them. There is no way to truly win when using auxiliaries.

Machiavelli lists more real world examples to prove his point. This is really the strength of his book. He asserts something and then backs it up with proof. Machiavelli's detractors may not like his blunt words, but even they cannot argue with his facts. These real world examples do more than prove Machiavelli's point. They give him credibility, and impress his readers with his wide knowledge and discernment. He is giving his reader, Lorenzo Medici, more reasons to call Machiavelli back into active service.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

War is the only art expected of a ruler. When a private citizen is proficient in war, he can raise himself to the rank of prince. When a prince thinks more of fine living than war, he will lose his state. It is not reasonable to expect someone who is armed to obey someone who is not. A prince who is ignorant of military matters cannot have the respect of his soldiers.

A prince must devote himself to military exercises even during times of peace. He does this through action and study. A prince must devote himself to hunting so that his body is used to hardship. He must also study the topography of his land so that he will know how to deploy his troops in every type of terrain. The prince who lacks this ability lacks the first requirement of a commander - namely, knowing how to locate the enemy, deploy his soldiers, and lay siege to a city.

Machiavelli praised Philopoemen because he thought of war constantly. If he was out in the country with friends, he would discuss how they would conduct a battle if they were fighting an enemy in that location. Thanks to these deliberations, he always had a solution when faced with a problem during battle.

A prince must also read history and think about the deeds of great men. He must examine how they acted during times of war, and seek to understand why they won or lost. Many wise men that enjoyed great success did so because they imitated the great men before them. Every wise prince should do the same, imitating the habits that led to success. He should endeavor to profit from their examples during times of peace so that he will be prepared for adversity when it comes.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Machiavelli outlines the proper course of study for any prince who wishes to be successful. The only way a prince's soldiers and subjects will respect him is if he is proficient in the art of war, and a prince becomes proficient in war through constant action and study.

Note that once again Machiavelli is emphasizing the importance of internal ability over favorable circumstances. A prince wins battles and keeps the respect of his troops by honing his abilities. He proves his right to rule. The shrewd prince does not hope that fortune will smile upon him when adversity strikes. He plans for success and makes his own fortune.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

All that remains is to consider how a prince should treat his subjects and friends. Many men have imagined principalities and republics that do not exist at all. The way men live is different from the way they should live. Therefore, anyone who abandons reality for a dream pursues his own downfall. A man who strives to be good in all of his actions will come to ruin, because there are so many men who are not good. A prince who is interested in surviving must know when to be good, and he must use this talent to effectively lead his people.

When people speak of princes they talk about qualities that bring either praise or censure. Some are called generous, while others are called miserly. Some are called cruel, while others are called merciful. It is not possible for a prince to embody only good qualities. Therefore, he should be shrewd enough to avoid those vices that will deprive him of his power. If possible, a prince should also avoid vices that will not rob him of his power. If he cannot, he should not be overly concerned about it. If a prince has a reputation for vices that allow him to keep his state, then he should not worry about those either. Every prince will find things that are good and yet will lead him to his downfall, and others that, while bad, will keep him safe.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Once again, Machiavelli makes the distinction between an effective ruler and a moral one. Most people are not good. If a prince tries to be good all the time, he will eventually be ruined by the people around him who are not good. Machiavelli is emphasizing that a prince has to rule people as they are, not as he wishes them to be.

This is a departure from the general instruction of the time. Most "instruction manuals" for rulers emphasized morality and Christian values. Good conduct always wins in an idealized world. In reality, the bad people win because they are willing to cheat. The prince that wishes to stay in power will then concentrate on avoiding vices that will rob him of his power. His personal goodness should be secondary to doing what he must to remain in power.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

It would be good to be a ruler known for generosity. However, gaining this reputation is harmful. A reasonably generous man will not be noticed. To gain a reputation as being generous, a prince must spend all of his resources and tax his subjects quite heavily. His subjects will hate him and, when he descends into poverty, everyone will find him contemptible. If he seeks to repair his error, he will soon be labeled a miser.

Since a reasonable ruler is unable to gain a reputation of generosity without harming himself and his state, he should not worry about being labeled a miser. He will seem more generous once his subjects realize that his shrewdness allows him to defend and attack without levying heavy taxes. Great things are accomplished by men who are unwilling to spend large amounts of money. The present King of France can wage so many campaigns without adding extra taxes to his people because he is shrewd with his money. The King of Spain would not have won so many campaigns if he had the reputation for being generous.

If a prince wishes to escape contempt and avoid preying on his subjects, he will welcome the name of miser. Some might say that Caesar gained power by being generous. Men are either in the process of becoming a ruler, or have that power already. If they already have the power, then generosity will do them harm. If they are in the process of becoming a ruler, a reputation for generosity is indeed necessary. If Caesar had survived and continued his generous ways, he would have lost his power.

Another person might disagree, saying that there are princes who accomplished great things and still had the reputation for generosity. These princes were generous with other people's possessions. He may give away what does not belong to him. This increases his position. Only giving away one's own possessions is harmful. Miserliness will never cause a prince's subjects to hate him. Liberality will, because the prince will have to harm his subjects to continue his generous ways.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Machiavelli turns the qualities of generosity and miserliness on their heads. Miserliness is good. Generosity is harmful. A prince cannot gain a reputation for generosity until he has bankrupted his state. It is far better to be labeled a miser, winning over one's subjects when they note its good effects. Generosity isn't efficient. The pleasant effects do not last. This is a rather cynical, but accurate, view of human nature. No one respects someone who spends their money foolishly. One might use such a person, but never respect them.

This does not apply to a prince who is climbing to power. He wants to be generous just long enough to gain his dominion. The only exception to this is if he is giving away

possessions that don't belong to him. Then he may be lavish enough to gain a reputation for generosity without harming his people. A prince may be generous when it costs him nothing, but miserly the rest of the time.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Every prince should wish to be thought of as kind rather than cruel. However, he must avoid misusing his kindness. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel, yet his cruelty resulted in peace in Romagna. On the other hand, when the Florentines tried to avoid cruelty, Pistoia was destroyed. Once a prince has set a few examples, he can afford to be kind. Disorder harms all of his people. A few well-placed executions harm only a few. The newly established prince can least afford excessive kindness.

Even so, a prince should be slow to believe and slow to act. He should avoid both carelessness and excessive harshness. Overall, it is better to be feared than loved. Men are fickle, greedy, and anxious to avoid danger. They will offer the ruler everything when the chance of sacrificing is remote. When the ruler needs them, they will turn from him. Men care less about offending those they love than they are of offending those they fear. Men may break the bond of love when it is to their advantage to do so. They are less likely to break a promise made in fear because they will dread the consequences of such actions.

A prince can make himself feared without making himself hated. He does this by leaving his subjects' property alone. This includes their women. If the prince must take someone's life, he must have ample reason for doing so. He should avoid taking property. A man will forgive a death of a relative far quicker than the loss of his livelihood.

A prince will not be able to hold an army together during times of war if he does not have the reputation for cruelty. This is the only way Hannibal kept his army from fighting each other, even though it was composed of many different races. Without his reputation for inhuman cruelty, he could not have accomplished such a feat. His other qualities would have been insufficient.

Proof of this can be seen in Scipio's case. His army mutinied because he allowed them more freedom than is compatible with military discipline. Fortunately, his actions were ruled by the Senate, so this propensity did him no lasting harm. Men will love who they will. Thus, a wise prince relies on what he can control.

Chapter 17 Analysis

In a book full of famous sayings, this chapter holds one of the best known: "It is better to be feared than loved." Fear is not the same as hate, nor does it mean that a prince's subjects are afraid of him. It simply means that one's subjects acknowledge that the consequences of disobedience outweigh one's natural self-interest.

A man will fear a prince who will execute him for disobedience, but he will not hate him for it. This can be seen in the example of Hannibal. His soldiers revered him even though he was cruel. They respected him for it. On some level, people expect to be punished if they do something wrong. If they are not punished, they lose all respect for the authority figure.

In the end, a prince must rely on what he can control. He can control his subjects' fear, but he cannot control their love. Once his subjects understand that their prince is not afraid to be cruel, they will do what he says to avoid pain. Then he can afford to be kind. A prince who wishes to keep his power will therefore use what will work reliably. It is more efficient and, in the end, will cost fewer lives.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Keeping one's word is a very good thing. However, history shows that it was the prince who had little regard for his word and understood how to deceive those who are honest. There are two ways of fighting. The first is by law and belongs to man. The second is by force and belongs to the animal. One cannot always win with the first method, so a prince must understand how to fight with the second.

A prince must be wily like the fox when looking for traps, and powerful like the lion that drives off wolves. A prince should not keep his word when it no longer profits him, or when the circumstances in which he made the promise no longer apply. This would be a bad way to behave if men were good, but men are not good. Since they would not keep a pledge, a prince is not obligated to do so. Still, a prince must understand how to mask this wily nature and become a good liar. People are simple and will believe what they want to believe. Pope Alexander was known for his deception, yet his tricks always worked, because he knew the nature of men.

A prince doesn't actually have to have all of the good qualities listed earlier. Having all of those good qualities and always trying to live by them would be harmful. It is better to seem to have them, and then change his conduct when necessary. A prince must change according to what his circumstances dictate. He must never say a word that does not seem compatible with all of the common human virtues. Of all of these, none is more important than seeming religious. The mob judges by what it sees. Those few that know what the prince really is will not dare to expose him, because the entire world is a mob. A prince's actions are judged by his results. If he conquers a state and keeps it, he will be judged honorable. The few will not win against the many if the many have someone to rely upon.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This is the chapter that Machiavelli's detractors hate the most. Indeed, it is hard to reconcile the bad behavior recommended here as a recipe for good government. However, one must return to Chapter 15, where Machiavelli states that most people speak of republics and principalities that never were. People do not act as they should. Rulers need to rule the people they actually have, not some idealized version of them.

According to Machiavelli, people are basically scoundrels. They serve their own interests whenever they can get away with it. One only has to look at the political maneuverings of the times to see why Machiavelli would have this opinion. If people are scoundrels, and will break faith when it suits them, keeping promises that will not profit one's own interest is not wise. As long as a prince acts as if he is a good man, people

will believe him and he will get his way. This may not be the way the world should work, but a prince must deal with reality, not fantasy.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

A prince ought to avoid those things that would make others hate him or hold him in contempt. He will cause his subjects to hate him if he is greedy and seizes their property or their women. He will create contempt if he is seen as fickle, effeminate, cowardly, frivolous, or irresolute. These qualities will cause him to lose his power. On the other hand, a prince who is decisive, bold, grave, and strong will be highly esteemed. He is unlikely to be attacked from within or without. Attack becomes less likely if he has reliable troops and reliable allies. He will have reliable allies and peace at home if he has reliable troops.

When there is peace outside the principality, a prince must worry about conspiracy inside it. He can avoid conspiracies if he avoids hatred and contempt. If the people do not hate their prince, conspirators will hesitate before trying to overthrow him. Conspiracies are complicated and, if the conspirators fear that the people will overthrow them, they will not act. There are many examples of conspiracies that succeeded in overthrowing the prince, yet failed because the people were content with his rule.

A prince does not have to worry about conspiracy if the people favor him. To that end, he must seek to avoid exasperating the nobles while, at the same time, keeping the common people satisfied. This is one of the most important duties of a prince. As such, a wise prince delegates unpopular tasks to others while fulfilling popular tasks himself.

The lives of certain Roman emperors may seem to contradict the above rule, but a closer examination shows that this is not the case. Generally, those emperors who were irresolute were overthrown by the Roman soldiers. The majority of those emperors that were greedy and excessively cruel also came to bad ends.

Septimius Severus is the exception. He used the death of Pertinax as an excuse to march his fellow soldiers to Rome, where he had himself crowned. Then he killed his two main rivals for power, one in open combat and the other with deception. Severus shows himself to be both a lion and a fox. He was feared and respected by everyone and not hated by his troops. His son Antonius had similar qualities, but he was excessively cruel, and was murdered in the middle of his army.

Princes are continually exposed to the assassination attempts of desperate men. Those who have nothing to lose can harm them. Men like these are very rare. A prince may guard against all else by avoiding serious harm to the people that immediately surround him.

Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, could have easily stayed in power if he had followed his father's footsteps. Instead, he encouraged his troops to engage in bad behavior toward the people in order to indulge his cruel nature. He did not preserve the

dignity of his office, nor did he restrain his prefects' savage behavior. This earned him the hatred of the people and the contempt of his troops. Once he had so many enemies, his troops slew him.

The princes of Italy have less trouble with their own soldiers because they do not have the same amount of power as the soldiers of Rome. A ruler will be better served to listen to his people than his troops. The only exceptions to this rule are the sultans of Turkey and Egypt. Their lands are controlled by their troops, and so the sultans have to listen to them above all else.

Anyone who considers the actions of emperors under discussion will see that it was either hatred or contempt that brought them to ruin. Pertinax and Alexander Severus, being new rulers, should not have tried to imitate Marcus Aurelius, who inherited his rule. Caracalle, Commodus, and Maximinus should not have tried to imitate Septimius Severus because they lacked the talent to follow through. Instead, a new prince should borrow those actions from Severus that will help him establish his authority, and then borrow from Marcus Aurelius those actions that will help him keep it.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Machiavelli lays out those actions that will create contempt and hatred in the nobility and the populace. Above all, a prince has to avoid being greedy, irresolute, and excessively cruel. He must keep a reliable army at hand to deal with outside attacks, and keep the people satisfied to avoid assassination and conspiracy. It is interesting to see what a large role public opinion plays in keeping a prince in power. On the one hand, Chapter 18 explains how easy it is to deceive the populace and keep it on one's side. On the other hand, a prince will lose his power if he ever loses his people's favor and if they ever begin to hate him.

Public opinion is strong enough to keep conspirators and assassins in check. It is strong enough to depose even the most savage ruler. One can see in this argument Machiavelli's republican tendencies coming through. He is essentially saying that all rulers, whether they be elected or not, rule by the consent of the people. The people are not hard to satisfy. It is a powerful idea, backed up with examples from the history of the Romans.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

A new prince in a newly acquired state never disarms his subjects. By arming them, you make their weapons your own. Those that are suspicious become loyal, and those that were already loyal continue to be. One cannot arm them all, but those that are armed will feel obligated to obey a prince. Those one does not arm will think it proper that those who take on added duties gain advantages. When a prince disarms the populace, it shows that he either distrusts or fears them, and both conditions will cause the people to hate him. Then one has to use mercenaries, whose shortcomings have already been discussed.

A prince who annexes a new state and adds it to his original dominion, on the other hand, should disarm the new subjects. Those that helped him acquire the state should keep their arms until he has some excuse to take them away. The arms of the entire state should eventually be in the hands of soldiers from his native domain.

Our forefathers used to say that it was necessary to stir up internal factionalism in their cities to keep them more easily. Factionalism, however, never does anyone any good. It is inevitable that a city divided into factions will fall to an outside enemy. The weaker faction will side with the enemy, and the stronger will not be able to hold out.

Venice stirred up factionalism in its cities, but it did not turn out for the best. When it was defeated at Vaila, one of these factions took all of its territories. A prince who must stir up factionalism to keep his state is a weak prince, for factions are not allowed in a strong state. Factionalism makes it easy for a prince to control his people during peacetime, but weakens him during times of war.

Princes become great by overcoming obstacles set in their way. That is why many believe that a wise prince will provoke opposition, and then increase his standing by removing it. New princes find more loyalty and usefulness in men they held in suspicion at the beginning of their rule. Such men will be compelled to serve loyally, seeking to erase the initial suspicion with good deeds.

The wise prince examines why his people helped him into power. If they helped him out of dissatisfaction with the old leader, the new prince will not keep them satisfied for long. It is much easier to win and keep the favor of those who were happy with the previous ruler than to keep the favor of those who were dissatisfied.

It is customary for princes to build fortresses so as to have a place of safety when attacked. Other princes have destroyed their fortresses in an effort to keep their states. The prince who fears his subjects more than foreign attack should have a fortress. Those princes who fear attack more than their subjects should not. The best fortress a prince can have is the favor of the people. If the people hate him, a fortress will not help.

The prince who builds a fortress and then believes it will protect him from a populace that hates him is deluding himself.

Chapter 20 Analysis

A great deal of Machiavelli's advice is based on the psychology of the people. Machiavelli discusses when to arm or disarm a newly acquired state. If the prince is going to live in the state, he should arm his new subjects. This will show trust, which makes the ones armed feel obligated to their new prince. If the prince is adding a state to his own, he should disarm the people and give their weapons to his own soldiers. In this instance, he can afford to disarm them because he already has soldiers. The reader sees Machiavelli's practical personality coming through.

Though the common wisdom advocates stirring up factionalism in one's cities, Machiavelli opposes this view. Factionalism is a sign of a weak state and a weak prince. If a prince needs to keep his people distracted so that they don't unite against him, he should examine why they are dissatisfied with him and fix the problem. The implication is that the prince who cannot rule on his own merits does not deserve to keep his dominion.

Again, Machiavelli is emphasizing the importance of public opinion. A ruler must have the consent of the people. In a book about acquiring and keeping power, it is a surprisingly republican thought. Machiavelli shows how public opinion can even effect one's decision regarding whether to build a fortress. The best fortress is favorable public opinion. Machiavelli will continue to weave this theme throughout the rest of his book.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Great actions and great proofs of ability win a prince esteem. Ferdinand, King of Spain, went from a weak monarch to a mighty king through his bold deeds. He expelled the Marranos, attacked Africa, waged war in Italy, and is now at war with France - all in the name of religion. Ferdinand's deeds fill his people with wonder and keep them preoccupied. Each new action follows so quickly from the last that none of them have time for conspiracy.

A prince should strive to be seen as a man of great ability in each thing he does. Whenever someone does something exceedingly good or bad, he should reward or punish him in a way that causes public comment. A prince should be a true ally or a true enemy. He should always declare himself for or against two warring parties, or the winner will get the prince next because he does not want a wavering ally. The loser will not help a prince because a prince did not help him.

When Antiochus sought to drive the Romans out of Greece, he sent envoys to their allies, the Achaens, in an effort to keep them neutral. The Romans sent envoys to urge them to act. The Roman envoy reminded the Achaens that neutrality would only make them lose their allies, and then they would become the prey of the winner.

It is always the party who is not the prince's ally that argues for neutrality. One's allies will always call for action. If a prince boldly commits himself and his ally wins, the ally will feel an obligation. There is a bond. If the prince's side loses, the ally will help the prince as much as he can. The prince will then become his partner in raising their collective fortune. When the two parties that are fighting are weaker than the prince, it is even more expedient to choose a side. The prince will be extinguishing the loser before he becomes dangerous, and will put the winner at his mercy.

If at all possible, a prince should avoid joining forces with someone stronger than him, so that he will not be in danger of becoming a prisoner of his ally. When such an arrangement cannot be avoided, a prince should boldly choose sides. No state can choose sides in complete safety. It will always be choosing between risks. It is the way of things. The prudent prince understands how to choose the side with the least risk.

A prince should show that he loves talent by supporting and honoring men of ability in each craft. He should encourage his subjects in activities that enrich the state and reward those that do so. To this end, he should occupy the people with festivals and events. The prince should also assemble with the various guilds in a city, showing his interest and generosity.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Chapter 21 returns to the theme of Chapter 18, and its recommendation that a prince should be both a fox and a lion. While Chapter 18 focused on the subtlety of the fox, Chapter 21 concentrates on lion-like traits. A lion is bold and direct. When two neighbors are warring, a prince must boldly declare which side he is on if he wishes to survive. Remaining neutral is a good way to lose one's allies and create suspicion in one's enemies.

There are other times when boldness is best. A prince should reward or punish extraordinary conduct in a way that highlights his abilities as a ruler. Machiavelli is pointing out that one of the duties of a prince is to be a showman. He must give his people many things to think about and comment upon. They will be so busy watching him that they will have no time for plotting. A satisfied populace is one that is distracted by great deeds.

In line with this, the prince should reward those that engage in activities that enrich the state. In earlier chapters, Machiavelli states that a prince should not take his people's possessions for himself. If the people know their possessions will not be touched, they will seek to get more of them, and this will bring money into the state. It is also a useful way to keep one's people distracted. A smart prince understands that he is sacrificing the temporary gain of the present for security and prosperity over the course of a lifetime. His state will be stronger as a result.

A satisfied, prosperous populace is good for power. Machiavelli's detractors may be right about how cold-blooded his advice can be. What they fail to see is that Machiavelli makes a strong case for keeping one's people content. Remember that he is speaking to people who are cynical about human nature. Machiavelli must make his arguments fit the world view of his audience.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

The first estimate of a prince's intelligence will be based on the type of men he keeps around him. If his ministers are capable and wise, he will be judged to be the same, for he picked them. If they are not wise, he will be judged unfavorably for the same reasons. They are the first test of his capacity to judge.

There are three kinds of minds. The first kind can think for itself, the second can understand the thinking of another man, and the third cannot think nor understand the thinking of others. The first type of mind is excellent, the second is good, and the third is worthless. When a prince does not have the first type of mind, he can still rule ably if he has the second. If he can distinguish between what is good and bad in his minister, his minister will never be able to deceive him and will work reliably.

It does not take a first rate mind to understand the character of a minister. If the minister thinks only of himself and his own advantage, he will not be a good minister. A minister must think only of what will help his prince. The prince, on the other hand, must think only of the minister. He must enrich him so that the minister never thinks of acquiring his own riches. He must give the man enough responsibilities and honors so that he fears a change of government. When the relationship between a minister and a prince stands like this, they may trust one another. If their relations are not like this, it leads to disaster.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Chapter 21 gives Machiavelli's readers reasons for promoting the prosperity of their subjects. Chapter 22 gives reasons for doing the same for one's ministers. A prince cannot be everywhere at once. His ministers will represent him on diplomatic missions and on other occasions. A prince will be judged by the way his ministers conduct themselves. This means that the prince must make good choices if he does not want to lose prestige. Once he finds good people to fill these positions, he must do everything he can to keep them loyal and reliable. Thus, Machiavelli gives his audience sound reasons for treating its ministers well. One doesn't treat one's ministers well because it is the right thing to do. One treats them well because it is the expedient thing to do, and it adds to one's prestige. These are arguments his audience could well feel comfortable with.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Princes cannot easily protect themselves from flatterers unless they are prudent or have good advisers. It is quite easy to be deceived about one's own qualities. The only way one can avoid all flattery is to let all men know that they will not offend if they tell the truth. If everyone feels free to tell the truth about everything, however, the prince will not receive due respect.

The prudent prince will then choose wise men and allow only them to speak truthfully. This freedom should only be used on subjects that the prince wishes to talk about, not on everything. The prince should listen to their counsel and then make up his own mind. He should listen to no one else. Otherwise, the prince will be deceived by flatterers or continually change his mind on a matter, and thus lose his reputation.

A recent example will make this point clear. Emperor Maximilian never seeks counsel because he is a secretive man. When his plans are discovered, they are opposed. The emperor lacks resolution and his mind is easily changed. As a result, his people can never have confidence in him.

A prince should therefore discourage anyone from giving him advice that he does not seek. If someone is holding back from telling him the truth, he should show his annoyance. A prince who is not wise cannot be wisely counseled. He can not reconcile the conflicting advice he will get. If he cannot do that, his counselors will pursue their own interests or take over his rule. Men will always be bad unless compelled otherwise. Good advice ultimately comes from the wisdom of the prince who asked for it and understood it, not the other way around.

Chapter 23 Analysis

A prince can never be sure if the people around him are telling him the truth or just what he wants to hear. The best way to guard against this is for a prince to choose to whom he listens. This is where good judgment comes into play. If, as chapter 22 states, a prince's first mistake comes from choosing the wrong ministers, his second is in choosing the wrong counselors.

Machiavelli acknowledges that everyone is susceptible to flattery. He then lays out a plan for asking for advice in a way that will diminish this vulnerability and, at the same time, preserve a prince's reputation. A prince needs to take advice. He also needs to appear bold, decisive, and intelligent in his own right. Otherwise, he will lose his reputation and, after that, his power. Machiavelli shows that getting and keeping power involves a continual balancing act that can only be successful if the prince has good judgment. The prince that can choose the right people to listen to and still make up his own mind deserves to preserve his power.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The actions of a new prince are always closely watched. When a prince shows himself able to rule, he will win the loyalty of the men around him. When people find themselves in good circumstances, they will enjoy it without seeking anything more. If this prince does not neglect his duties, his people will defend him. He will thus gain double honor because he will have both acquired and secured his rule.

The rulers in Italy who lost their dominions all had the same defect. They either did not rely on their own armed forces, made the people hate them, or did not protect themselves from the nobility. Therefore, princes who lose their dominions should blame themselves and not fortune. They did not plan ahead and did not fight effectively for what is theirs. Such princes retreat instead of fighting, hoping that the people will call them back into power. This is foolish. The man who falls in the belief that someone will help him up is deceiving himself. The only defenses one can count on come from one's own resourcefulness.

Chapter 24 Analysis

There is an unstated theme developing in these last few chapters. A man of ability and resourcefulness gathers loyalty and power to him because of what he is. This is a very Renaissance attitude. While the kings of the Middle Ages ruled by the divine right of kings, Machiavelli's princes rule because they deserve to. The flip side of this argument means that a prince who loses his territory deserves that as well. One may regret that a prince like Cesare Borgia did not keep what he won, but it was no one's fault but his. A prince can only rely on his own abilities. Everything else is a fantasy.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Many men believe that the affairs of the world are controlled by God and fortune. Therefore, they should not worry much over these matters and so go as the wind takes them. The great changes in our time have only reinforced this idea.

Fortune is like a river that occasionally overruns its banks. Though all must flee before the flood, still one can make provisions against it during times when the river is calm. Just as one can channel rising water or reduce its damage, one can do the same with fortune. It tends to show its strength where there are no provisions against it. Italy is a country without defenses against fortune. If it was guarded by suitable forces, as is the case with Germany, France, and Spain, fortune would have made little or no changes to it.

There are two main reasons why a prince can be ruling in security one day and be overthrown the next. If the prince relies entirely on fortune to keep him in his position, he will fail when his fortunes change. A prince may also lose his dominion if his mode of action does not fit with the times. If he is a patient and cautious man and the times lend themselves to this kind of action, he will prosper. He will fail if the times change. No one can go against his or her nature. One will not be persuaded that what worked so well before cannot work again.

Consider Pope Julius II. He was impetuous in all he did. This fit the times so well that he found great success. If the times had changed before he died, he would have failed. After having met with such great success, he would never have changed his mode of action.

Men will find success as long as their mode of action is in harmony with the times. If one had to choose, being impetuous is better than being cautious. Fortune is a woman who will more readily submit to boldness than cold calculation. This is why fortune favors young men. They tend to be more aggressive and daring.

Chapter 25 Analysis

This chapter highlights the unique view the progressive Renaissance thinker has about fortune. One's life is not ruled by fate. Fortune cannot be completely controlled, but it can be managed. The prudent person sets up defenses against fortune so that he is not overwhelmed by it. If one does not put down provisions against fortune, one will fail when one's circumstances change. It is as simple as that.

There is one thing that a man cannot hope to fight against. He can not fight his own nature. He will always seek to fix problems and grasp opportunities in the same way. If his way fits the times, he will succeed. This is as close as Machiavelli will come to

admitting that there are some circumstances beyond one's control. Even then the tone remains very Renaissance; a man rises and falls in power purely on his own merit, not because of divine will.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

The time is ripe for a prudent and resourceful man to win honor for himself and the well-being of Italy. The Israelites had to be enslaved so that Moses could demonstrate his resourcefulness. The Persians had to be oppressed before Cyrus could manifest his greatness of spirit. Italy, then, has been ravaged so that someone can heal her wounds and build her up.

There is no one more likely than the Medici family to step into such a role. The task will not be difficult if one will keep in mind the examples of the great men from the past. Their task was no easier than the one that Italy presents. They had even less opportunity than the one enjoyed presently by the Medici family.

It is not surprising that Italy has not achieved greatness before now. The old laws are no good. Nothing will so honor a new prince than setting up laws and ordinances that are sound and wide ranging in scope. In Italy there is no lack of people waiting to follow a great leader.

If the Medici house wishes to imitate the great men of old, it will produce a force made out of Italian soldiers. None could be more loyal than these. The Swiss and Spanish infantry have vulnerabilities. If a prince were to concern himself with developing a third kind of infantry, along with new weapons and battle formations, none could stand against him. Italy would at last find its savior. Who would fail to give such a person obedience? Who's envy could stop him? Under such leadership Italy could at last prove its Roman might.

Chapter 26 Analysis

In this last chapter, Machiavelli sums up his two most important points. The first is something he has repeated again and again in his work. Namely, Italy needs native troops, not mercenaries. This is a point he has tried to make during his entire professional career.

The second point is a call to action. The Medici family has the power and the opportunity to unite Italy. Essentially, they will prosper if they follow Machiavelli's advice. The call to action, then, has two parts. The Medici family should reform the ills of the entire country and not focus solely on a few states. Secondly, they should use Machiavelli to help them do it. This repeats the points he raised in his dedication. He closes his book as many writers do, by ending at the beginning.

Characters

Agathocles the Sicilian

Machiavelli cites Agathocles as an example of someone who attained his political control through crime. Agathocles lived from 361 to 289 BC and came from humble origins his father was a potter. He rose up through the military ranks in Syracuse to become the praetor.

One morning, he assembled the members of the Senate of Syracuse and with one signal had all of the Senators and the town's richest people killed, leaving no one to oppose his political control. Machiavelli credits him for taking control of his own destiny.

Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great was a Macedonian ruler in the fourth century BC. He is used as an example by Machiavelli on how to divide and rule conquered territory.

Alexander VI

The father of Cesare Borgia, Rodrigo became Pope Alexander VI in 1492. Machiavelli notes that it was Alexander who helped propel his son into power. While Machiavelli acknowledges Alexander's role in Cesare's career, he credits Cesare with making the political decisions that accounted for his rise to power.

Cesare Borgia

Many of Machiavelh's examples of the effective ways for a prince to gain and retain power refer to practices he observed in his acquaintance with Cesare Borgia. He recounts that after being given the opportunity to rule Romagna, Borgia secured his position by following a set of standards that should be followed by any new ruler.

In particular, Machiavelli attributes four key ruling strategies to Cesare Borgia: eliminating all challengers to the throne, gaining the favor of the powers in Rome, especially the Pope; winning the support of the College of Cardinals; and defeating his enemies quickly and efficiently

Rodrigo Borgia

See Alexander VI

Charles VIII

Charles VIII was the French king who led the successful invasion against Italy in 1494. This invasion forced the Medici family to relinquish their control of Florence (which they later regained in 1512).

Liverotto da Fermo

Machiavelli uses Liverotto as an example of a prince who gained political power due to criminal means. An orphan, Liverotto was raised by his maternal uncle. After serving in the army, he returned to his uncle's home, asking if he could bring his entire army with him to impress his uncle's associates. After dinner, Liverotto took the powerful men aside, pretending that he had some secret to tell them. On his command they all were slaughtered. In the end, Liverotto's reign was stopped by one who could match him in deception and cruelty□Cesare Borgia.

Antonio da Venafro

Da Venafro was a professor of law in Sienna and minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Sienna. Machiavelli deems him a respected, intelligent advisor His discussion about Antonio's good qualities and how they reflect on his prince represent a thinly-veiled attempt to stress how much Machiavelli's own good reputation and wise counsel would help the reputation of the prince who would hire him.

Remirro de Oreo

De Orca is Cesare Borgia's minister in Ro-magna He ruled with ruthless power and was much hated. When he had outlived his purpose□that is, when the people threatened to rise up and kill him□Borgia had him killed. His body was left in the public square one morning, cut in half In this way, Borgia was able to claim that the cruelty perpetrated against the people had come from Remirro, and not from him.

Ferdinand of Aragon

Ferdinand of Aragon was the king of Spain at the time that Machiavelli was writing *The Prince.*

He was considered to be a new prince because he abruptly changed his style of ruling, becoming more aggressive later in his reign. His reputation grew by attacking Granada and by waging religious war against the Muslims that lived in Spain.

Louis XII

Louis was the French ruler from 1498 to 1515. Louis was an ally of the Venetians, and he is used as an example of how such alliances hurt city-states.

Girolamo Savonarola

Savonarola was a Dominican monk who preached to the people of Florence about self-government He was instrumental in ousting the Medici family from power in 1498.

Valentino

See Cesare Borgia

Themes

Politics

The Prince is considered one of the more important and influential books about politics ever written. It is esteemed by generations of readers because it is thought to show how politics really works. The book presents itself as a handbook it offers practical advice to a new pnnce or leader how to gain, consolidate, and keep political power.

Prior to Machiavelli, political theorists judged a prince's reign on how moral the prince was: did he go to church? Did he sin? Was he a good man? Yet with *The Prince,* Machiavelli contended that it wasn't how moral the prince actually was, but how he was perceived by his subjects. In other words, appearance was all that mattered; it didn't matter what a prince did in private, as long as he was upstanding, honest, and fair in public

Fate and Chance

The concepts of fortune and virtue are recurring ones in *The Prince* Although these words can mean a variety of things, in this book fortune refers to those events that are beyond human control, and virtue means the things people can do to control fate.

It would be counterproductive for a how-to manual of this type to use fortune to explain most of life's events. The point of Machiavelli's book is to recommend the most effective tactics to stay in power, not to put a damper on his activities. He estimates that half of our actions may be caused by fortune while free will controls the other half; but fortune has the greater significance because when it asserts itself it is like a raging flood, washing away all that is in its path.

Continuing with the flood metaphor, he notes that virtue can control the flow of fortune in the same way that dikes and dams control a flood. Rather than using the idea of fate or luck as an excuse□as a great many theorists do when things do not work out as expected□Machiavelh warns princes that they must prepare themselves against fortune and be ready to change their methods in order to accept what fortune brings. Yet because of this, he has more admiration for rulers who are reckless than those who are cautious□the cautious ones are fooling themselves about how much they really control their fate.

Deception

According to Machiavelli, political leaders should be allowed to deceive their subjects The test of a politician is not how well he keeps his word, but whether he is *perceived* to be honest.

It is not Machiavelli's goal to uphold morality, but to advise political leaders on the best way to strengthen their power. For him, the best way to remain in power is to tell the people what they want to hear□whether it is true or not.

According to this theory, it would actually be detrimental for a prince to tell the truth all of the time. In fact, he explains that a "prudent" ruler "cannot observe faith, nor should he, when such observance turns against him, and the causes that make him promise have been eliminated." Later in the same paragraph, he adds, "Nor does a prince ever lack legitimate cause to color his failure to observe faith."

"Observing faith," like "keeping faith," means to remain true and honest. With these lines Machiavelli is telling readers that the prince should break his promises when circumstances change and then lie about why he broke his promise. This sort of moral relativism□changing one's ethical code from one situation to the next□is effective for retaining the prince's hold on power, even though it violates most systems of ethics.

War and Peace

In Machiavelli's time, countries were constantly at war with one another. Therefore, the ability to effectively lead during wartime was a much more important measurement of a politician than it is in contemporary times. Much of the political theory in *The Prince* is centered on a principality's ability to defend itself against attacks.

Machiavelli approves of a strong army, but he cautions a prince to create such a force from his own subjects and to not rely on mercenaries or on soldiers borrowed from other lands. He does approve of taking control of other countries through military aggression.

His central message to princes is to keep their subjects happy; therefore, his subjects will stay loyal and fight off an invasion by a new ruler. As with most subjects, Machiavelli views war and peace as means to popularity, noting that the failure to stir up conflict in a relatively peaceful time will make rulers look weak.

Style

Point of View

Most of *The Prince* is written from the first-person point of view. In other words, the speaker of the work refers to himself directly, using the word "I." In this case, the speaker is the same person as the book's author, Niccol6 Machiavelli.

In the "Dedicatory Letter" that opens the book, Machiavelli openly addresses Lorenzo de Medici, a member of the Florence ruling family. In the letter, Machiavelli states that what is written there will illustrate "my extreme desire that you arrive at the greatness that your future and your other qualities promise you." He addresses Lorenzo again near the end of the book, speaking directly of the current situation in Italy.

Throughout the book, though, he wrote with the formal "you," referring to a plural, a general readership, as modern readers might use the word in a statement like, "you need to take vitamins if you are going to stay healthy." As the English language uses one word, "you," for both the direct (singular) and general (plural) forms of address, it can be difficult to follow the subtle changes of point of view used by Machiavelli.

Structure

In presenting *The Prince* as a guidebook for new princes, Machiavelli rejected a conventional narrative structure and instead divided his book by issues of leadership. The textbook structure is based on logic: it starts with general types of political situations and examines them each for a few chapters before going on to a few chapters about how princes come to acquire new principalities, following that with a few chapters about war, then princes' styles and reputations, finishing with advice about the people who they keep close to them.

Overall, the structure of the book moves from general issues to specific issues. This structure also disguises the fact that Machiavelli is using the book as a resume, he is obviously auditioning for a job with Lorenzo de Medici.

Modernism

Critics often explore Machiavelli's pragmatic views by asserting that the Florentine author was a modernist born hundreds of years ahead of his time. In the late 1800s a movement within the Roman Catholic Church began to challenge the Church's teachings. Scholars who followed this movement known as the modernist movement sought to publish their own philosophical works without having to seek the approval of the church.

While Machiavelli did not directly question the authority of the church, the very fact that he talked about the church only as a political institution and did not claim that the Pope had absolute divine knowledge is enough to categorize him with the modern philosophers of the eighteenth century. In 1907 Pope Pius X issued a papal encyclical that deemed the movement a synthesis of all heresies, a charge reminiscent of those levied against Machiavelli, who was referred to as an agent of the devil when *The Prince* was published.

Although Machiavelli's style was familiar to readers of his day, the fact that he used a textbook on political education to cover broader ideas about morality might be considered a modernist technique, especially by those critics who assert that he was trying to be ironic in *The Prince,* Irony occurs when there is a distance between what a work says and what the author means, and it is common for modernist works to use old, familiar forms ironically.

Historical Context

The Medici Family

Lorenzo di Medici was a member of a family who ruled Florence for almost three centuries (1434-1737). They lost control of Florence for only a brief time (1494 to 1512) when a reform government was established to run Florence. Machiavelli was a member of the reform government, and he lost his government post when the Medici family regained power in 1512. *The Prince* was written as Machiavelli's way of gaining the Medici family's favor by offering advice based on his experience in government.

The first Medici came to Florence from the surrounding farmlands around the year 1200. At that time Italy was not a unified country, but a land scattered with separate, powerful, feudal cities. Florence was one of the most prominent of these city-states

It is believed that the family prospered in Florence. The social class system was strictly the wealthy merchant class, known as the *popolo grasso* ("the fat people"), suppressed the lower class, known as the *popolo minuto* ("the lean people").

The Ordinances of Justice (1293) established the city as a republic to be ruled under democratic principles. Although true democracy was never achieved□political rights were reserved for members of higher political standing□it did much to change the political landscape. Florence was looked on by other Italian city-states as a model of progressive thinking.

Giovanni di Bicci de Medici (1360-1429) was the first real politician of the family. He was a banker and a powerful member of the popular political party. Though he considered himself a businessman only dabbling in politics, Giovanni was elected *prior* of Florence three times.

It was his son Cosimo (1389-1464) who first established the family's control of the city, ruling Florence for thirty years. He was a brutal, aggressive leader. Yet he is also remembered as a financial supporter of some of the Renaissance's leading artists, including Donatello and Brunelleschi.

Cosimo's son, Piero (1414-1469). was a quiet, contemplative man. Yet Cosimo's grandson was one of the most powerful in Italian history: Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492), who took control in 1469, the year of Machiavelli's birth.

Lorenzo was a strong-willed ruler and an outstanding patron of the arts. Among the great thinkers who stayed at his house were Leonardo di Vinci, Michelangelo, and Botticelli. Yet he was tyrannical and ruthless in his reign.

When he brought a Dominican friar named Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) to Florence in 1485, Savonarola quickly became a popular spiritual leader who raised public sentiment against the Medici family.

After Lorenzo's death, his son Piero (1471-1503) assumed leadership. Considered weak and foolish, Piero was very unpopular with his subjects. Savonarola and his supporters drove Piero from power in 1494. The Florentine Republic proved unstable, though, and the Medici family returned to power in 1512. They ruled the city until 1737.

Renaissance

The Renaissance began in Italy in the fourteenth century and spread to the rest of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the Renaissance, the agricultural-based economy and religious domination of the Middle Ages virtually disappeared and was replaced by a society governed by centralized political institutions and urban-centered, commercial economies

The Renaissance is also characterized by great strides in the fields of mathematics, philosophy, medicine, and astronomy. Yet the greatest legacy of the Renaissance period is found in the field of art□and the greatest Renaissance artists lived in Florence.

Artistic advances were numerous and significant during this period. Linear perspective□the mathematical ordering of the scene portrayed on a painter's canvas so that things are proportional to their distance from the viewer□was developed by Filippo Brunelleschi. Leonardo Da Vinci painted the *Mona Lisa,* which remains the most recognized painting in the world. The sculptor Donatello as well as the painter Botticelli lived and worked in Florence Even those artists who did not live there at least passed through Florence, eager to gain inspiration from the terrific artistic revolution that occurred during the period.

Critical Overview

Almost as soon as it was published in 1532, *The Prince* was derided as a controversial, hereti-

cal work. Sidney Angelo collected a handful of these early reviews that he found during his research:

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we find Machiavelli depicted as the very hand of the devil; ad an "imp" of Satan, as "hell-bourne", as a "damnable fiend" of the underworld, as the "gret monster-master of hell " John Donne once went so far as to describe a vision of the netherworld in which Machiavelli, attempting to gain a place in Lucifer's innermost sanctum, was out-argued by Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits And it was even possible for Samuel Butler to suggest, facetiously, that "Old Nick" himself took his name from "Nick Machiavel"

The Prince was placed on the Papal Index of Prohibited Books in 1559, but historians disagree to whether this was for religious or political reasons.

More telling is the scathing reaction to Machiavelli by English minister Richard Harvey in his treatise *A Theological Discourse of the Lamb of God and His Enemies* (1590). After discussing how much Machiavelli's anti-Christian philosophy sickened him, comparing him to a spider who has gathered his venom from "old philosophers and heathen authors," Harvey warns to his readers:

Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth that he shall also reap for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting

Given that the purpose of *The Prince* was to raise revolutionary ideas rejecting the old morality in favor of a new one it is hardly surprising that early critics might find Machiavelli disturbing and heretical.

However, by the nineteenth century, critics became interested in Machiavelli's purposes for writing *The Prince.* His theories of moral relativism were no longer shocking. The ideas that Machiavelli had been condemned for were known all over the world. Critics began to praise him for his honesty and insight into the political arena.

For instance, Lord Macaulay Thomas Babington asserted in 1827 that ordinary readers could be expected to view Machiavelli as the most depraved and shameless of human beings, but that, in fact, "[h]is works prove, beyond all contradiction, that his understanding was strong, and his sense of the ridiculous exquisitely keen."

By the end of the 1800s, Machiavelli's ideas had become so commonly accepted that critics seldom felt the need to soften their praise of him. The introduction to the 1891

edition of *The Prince* contained glowing praise from the eminent sociologist Lord Acton John Emench Edward Dalberg-Acton.

Dalberg-Acton rejected the moral objections to Machiavelli's work, maintaining that they may be legitimate but that his great contribution to the world of political discourse made them necessary. He praised Machiavelli as "the earliest conscious and articulate exponent of certain living forces in the present world," contending that the events that had occurred since the publication of the book had only served to make his ideas more relevant.

Twentieth-century students of Machiavelli have addressed his personal motives for writing *The Prince.* Critic Garrett Mattingly ridiculed the idea of the book as a serious guide. In fact, Mattingly made the case that the book's apparent attempt to aid and justify dictators contradicts everything else that Machiavelli wrote.

The book must be a satire of totalitarian rulers, Mattingly concluded, written at a time when its author would have been most hesitant to openly criticize political leaders□when he had just been freed from jail

Many other recent critics have examined the specific question of what is meant by *Virtu.* Entire books have been written debating Machiavelli's meaning, while other critics have concluded that he had no set meaning for the word at all.

Interestingly, the word "Machiavellian" is still used as an insult□implying dishonesty and greed□but there is seldom a question of Machiavelli's historical importance.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of literature and creative writing at College of Lake County, Illinois. In the following essay, he questions whether The Prince *can be considered useful for the modern student.*

Is it prudish of me to focus on the obvious antisocial element that most people notice first when they read *The Prince?* Is it naive to reject the version of reality that he was selling? Each time I read this book, I think of what a good movie it would make, filled as it is with tough, cynical lines giving those who hold high office advice that would be more appropriate in jail: that only suckers play by the rules. I wonder about our motives as a society, about what we hope to gain when we read this.

Like most good novels, its attraction to us is mixed□it can teach us something about the world, but it is also (and this is a facet too frequently ignored) a fine piece of entertainment. We shouldn't confuse the two and value it for what it is not. *The Prince* calls itself a primer for novice politicians, and it is full of iron-clad truths, but it does not really offer much advice that can be applied to life in any practical way.

We should have no problem admitting that we enjoy reading Machiavelli: we like the serious, efficient tone of his cutthroat attitude, even while pretending that we don't. It has been nearly five hundred years *The Prince* was written, and still we read it, analyze it, discuss it and assign it in schools. Ninety percent of books written are not in print five years after their initial publication, let alone fifty years or a hundred. There must be some reason for his popularity.

I think that there is an aspect of entertainment to be drawn from an idea like "cruelties badly or well used," that our culture is constantly trying to think up ways to fill that mysterious category of "cruelties well used" at the same time that it wants to tell us that cruelty has no place in the civilized world.

This ideal prince belongs to a long history of imaginary characters who make their own laws. Increasingly, as the world has gotten more crowded and laws more restrictive, we dream up do-gooders who transgress the conventional morality in their search for some higher good. There have always been, and always will be, the Zorros and Billy Jacks and Dirty Harrys and Buffy the Vampire Slayers, using bad means for good ends, and Machiavelli's ideal ruler falls right in with them.

The book explains that the prince must use cruelty sometimes, or else his subjects will quit their support of him and leave the government defenseless against anarchy and eventual overthrow by persons who would not use their cruelty so well. Our culture is brimming with antiheroes who are forced to step over to the dark side and engage in immoral behavior in order to preserve morality.

Their appeal may stem from a sense that the prevailing social order is absurd. It may come from an inherent sadism that, in a desire to watch somebody take advantage of

somebody else, twists the rules of what is acceptable to make such bullying just. The important thing is that this rogue element is and always has been entertaining, a crowd-pleaser, and this is the category where I think *The Prince* belongs

It is more problematic to consider *The Prince* an educational experience It was written as a handbook□its only stated goal is to advise anyone who might come into control of a Renaissance city-state on how to maintain order. Compassion has no place except as a tool for keeping the people's support Yet most of us are not princes, and we do not live in principalities. We have a right to wonder what this book has to offer beyond its entertainment value.

The book would be well worth serious attention if only because it has the educational value that any five-hundred-year-old artifact has Curious Americans go to Colonial Williamsburg and wonder what the seventeenth century must have been like; they visit Civil War battlefields that saw action less than a hundred and fifty years ago. The works of Shakespeare (almost a century after Machiavelli) are important to us today because of the writer's artistry, but a common person's diary from the same time is also important for telling us who we are and where we come from.

Simply, the value of *The Prince* becomes one of those unsolvable chicken-and-egg questions about which came first: is the book valuable because it is so old, or have we kept it around to reach this old age because it is so valuable? Either way, we all have to agree that there's something useful there.

Unlike the common person's diary, which might or might not provide a few interesting bits of information here and there, *The Prince* appeared at a transitional point in world history□when the past meets the future. The book can serve as a portal between our world and medieval society. We can generalize by saying that the world Machiavelli was rebelling against was one ruled by religious assumptions that supported political systems that had been handed down intact for centuries.

Just as Renaissance artists made their marks by cutting through tradition and organizing their works according to their own innate sense of rationality, so too Machiavelli and Renaissance political scientists evaluated ideas based on their effectiveness. Unlike most progressives who have no patience for quaint, old-fashioned ideas, he treated such ideas as threats to the security of the principality.

When studying history, it is always enlightening to look at the examples that connect two different eras, and shows one way of life at the moment it evolves into the next. *The Prince* represents a moment of political transition, and for that, it is worth the modern reader's attention.

The advice the book offers, though, is hardly any more useful to us today than a medieval broadsword would be. No one can deny that his rules work, but why should we be impressed with that? There has never been any mystery about winning a fight by being the first one to throw the rules aside and resort to eye gouging and punching below the belt: it is the problem of playing within the rules that makes winning difficult.

Manners go stale right out of the box. When the rules are ridiculous (which happens much less than they seem), then it is easy to agree with the suggestion that we crumple them up and start again.

Yet *The Prince* doesn't simply suggest that we give up obscure niceties like helping old women across streets: it tells political leaders they should he to their subjects, and then lie about why they lied when they are caught; it tells them they should lure others into positions of trust, and then kill them; it tells them to hide behind others when their crimes are found; and to start wars even when there is no reason to, just for the sake of keeping the troops sharp.

Scholars since the Renaissance have been scandalized by *The Prince*□and for good reason. Machiavelli's rules do not make sense, and would only lead to disastrous policy. They rip out any hope that social order could be based on cooperation and replace it with sham cooperation. Do politicians need to be trained to act in their own self-interest*? A power-mad, would-be dictator would look to Machiavelli to justify his or her actions, but ruthlessness flourishes enough without teaching it in schools.

If life is a jammed freeway, Machiavelli is the one who tells certain self-important people that they deserve to pull of onto the shoulder of the road and drive past everyone else. That sort of advice wasn't even good for society when there actually were royal personages around.

Yet we still endure generations of historians who praise Machiavelli for telling it like it is, for having the guts to stand up against a society that tries to suppress his frankness, as if from fear. They treat him like the lone honest voice in the wilderness.

By necessity, this stance requires one to look at the advocates of honesty and peace as dreamers, as pie-in-the-sky idealists. There really is no reason to think that believing a "hit them before they hit you" attitude is any more "realistic" than cooperation, although the less aggressive approach would, with no other evidence, be the sort of thing people would like to imagine.

There's no reason to equate backstabbing with reality. Idealizing treachery does not do anyone good except the treacherous, and the point of having a society is to minimize□if not eliminate□ treachery. Lying and killing are not good for the general public, no matter how much Machiavelli dresses them up as the lesser evils when stood beside anarchy and social unrest.

If lying and killing are not for the public good, then it seems strange we would treat these guidelines as pearls of wisdom dropped at our feet We wouldn't accept bank robbery or drug running as "effective" methods of raising money, although they can be□Machiavelli's recommendations to the prince are irrelevant when they are applied within a moral system, and they are blandly obvious in a place where morality is left out of the equation.

We have enough trouble getting politicians to do the things they say they will□who needs them reading books that tell them that honesty is irrelevant? If Machiavelli is

"telling a truth that nobody else dared to tell" (a courageous line that graces the posters advertising movies about those antiheroes mentioned before), we might want to think about why no one has told it before.

A recent news article about the leader of a nationwide crime gang that made billions of dollars in drugs and extortion each year describes him as "smart and manipulative, a reader of Machiavelli who tried to project a positive image through food giveaways to the poor." This is the sort of "prince" who might use Machiavelli's advice, although it seems more likely that he already knew which opponents to kill, which underlings to threaten, before he had the time in prison to catch up on his reading.

It's more likely that he bought a copy of *The Prince* once and left it around unread, and the magazine writer picked up on it as a neat way to contrast the thuggishness of gang members with a methodical political education. It is no contrast.

The Prince can feed our imaginations about people claiming rights over and above those granted to ordinary people, and it can teach us history, but its advice has always been more ornamental than useful.

Source: David Kelly, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Mansfield provides an overview of The Prince, *describing the work as "the most famous book on politics when politics is thought to be earned on for its own sake, unlimited by anything above it."*

Anyone who picks up Machiavelh's *The Prince* holds in his hands the most famous book on politics ever written. Its closest rival might be Plato's *Republic,* but that book discusses politics in the context of things above politics, and politics turns out to have a limited and subordinate place In *The Prince* Machiavelli also discusses politics in relation to things outside politics, as we shall see, but his conclusion is very different. Politics according to him is not limited by things above it, and things normally taken to be outside politics the "givers" in any political situation turn out to be much more under the control of politics than politicians, peoples, and philosophers have hitherto assumed. Machiavelli's *The Prince,* then, is the most famous book on politics when politics is thought to be carried on for its own sake, unlimited by anything above it. The renown of *The Prince* is precisely to have been the first and the best book to argue that politics has and should have its own rules and should not accept rules of any kind or from any source where the object is not to win or prevail over others. *The Prince* is briefer and pithier than Machiavelli's other major work, *Discourses on Livy,* for *The Prince* is addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, a prince like the busy executive of our day who has little time for reading. So *The Prince* with its political advice to an active politician that politics should not be limited by anything not political, is by far more famous than the *Discourses on Livy*

We cannot, however, agree that *The Prince* is the most famous book on politics without immediately correcting this to say that it is the most infamous. It is famous for its infamy, for recommending the kind of politics that ever since has been called Machiavellian. The essence of this politics is that "you can get away with murder": that no divine sanction, or degradation of soul, or twinge of conscience will come to punish you. If you succeed, you will not even have to face the infamy of murder, because when "men acquire who can acquire, they will be praised or not blamed" (Chapter 3). Those criminals who are infamous have merely been on the losing side. Machiavelli and Machiavellian politics are famous or infamous for their willingness to brave infamy.

Yet it must be reported that the prevailing view among scholars of Machiavelli is that he was not an evil man who taught evil doctrines, and that he does not deserve his infamy. With a view to his preference for republics over principalities (more evident in the *Discourses on Livy* than in *The Prince,* but not absent in the latter), they cannot believe he was an apologist for tyranny, or, impressed by the sudden burst of Italian patriotism in the last chapter of *The Prince,* they forgive him for the sardonic observations which are not fully consistent with this generous feeling but are thought to give it a certain piquancy (this is the opinion of an earlier generation of scholars); or, on the basis of Machiavelli's saying in Chapter 15 that we should take our bearings from "what is done" rather than from "what should be done," they conclude that he was a forerunner of modern political science, which is not an evil thing because it merely tells us what

happens without passing judgment In sum, the prevailing view of the scholars offers excuses for Machiavelli: he was a republican, a patriot, or a scientist, and therefore, in explicit contradiction to the reaction of most people to Machiavelli as soon as they hear of his doctrines, Machiavelli was not "Machiavellian."

The reader can form his own judgment of these excuses for Machiavelli. I do not recommend them, chiefly because they make Machiavelli less interesting. They transform him into a herald of the future who had the luck to sound the tunes we hear so often today□democracy, nationalism or self-determination, and science. Instead of challenging our favorite beliefs and forcing us to think, Machiavelli is enlisted into a chorus of self-congratulation There is, of course, evidence for the excuses supplied on behalf of Machiavelli, and that evidence consists of the excuses offered by Machiavelli himself. If someone were to accuse him of being an apologist for tyranny, he can indeed point to a passage in the *Discourses on Livy* (II2) where he says (rather carefully) that the common good is not observed unless in republics; but if someone else were to accuse him of supporting republicanism, he could point to the same chapter, where he says that the hardest slavery of all is to be conquered by a republic And, while he shows his Italian patriotism in Chapter 26 of *The Prince* by exhorting someone to seize Italy in order to free it from the barbarians, he also shows his fairmindedness by advising a French king in Chapter 3 how he might better invade Italy the next time. Lastly, it is true that he sometimes merely reports the evil that he sees, while (unnecessarily) deploring it; but at other times he urges us to share in that evil and he virtuously condemns halfhearted immoralists. Although he was an exceedingly bold writer who seems to have deliberately courted an evil reputation, he was nonetheless not so bold as to fail to provide excuses, or prudent reservations, for his boldest statements. Since I have spoken at length on this point in another place, and will not hesitate to mention the work of Leo Strauss, it is not necessary to explain it further here.

What is at issue in the question of whether Machiavelli was "Machiavellian"? To see that a matter of the highest importance is involved we must not rest satisfied with either scholarly excuses or moral frowns. For the matter at issue is the character of the rules by which we reward human beings with fame or condemn them with infamy, the very status of morality. Machiavelli does not make it clear at first that this grave question is his subject. In the Dedicatory Letter he approaches Lorenzo de' Medici with hat in one hand and *The Prince* in the other. Since, he says, one must be a prince to know the nature of peoples and a man of the people to know the nature of princes, he seems to offer Lorenzo the knowledge of princes he does not have but needs. In accordance with this half-serious promise, Machiavelli speaks about the kinds of principalities in the first part of *The Prince* (Chapters 1-2) and, as we learn of the necessity of conquest, about the kinds of armies in the second part (Chapters 12-14). But at the same time (to make a long story short), we learn that the prince must or may lay his foundations on the people (Chapter 9) and that while his only object should be the art of war, he must in time of peace pay attention to moral qualities in such manner as to be able to use them in time of war (Chapter 14, end).

Thus are we prepared for Machiavelli's clarion call in Chapter 15, where he proclaims that he "departs from the orders of others" and says why. For moral qualities are

qualities "held good" by the people; so, if the prince must conquer, and wants, like the Medici, to lay his foundation on the people, who are the keepers of morality, then a new morality consistent with the necessity of conquest must be found, and the prince has to be taught anew about the nature of peoples by Machiavelli. In departing from the orders of others, it appears more fitting to Machiavelli "to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it." Many have imagined republics and principalities, but one cannot "let go of what is done for what should be done," because a man who "makes a profession of good in all regards" comes to ruin among so many who are not good. The prince must learn to be able not to be good, and use this ability or not according to necessity.

This concise statement is most efficacious. It contains a fundamental assault on all morality and political science, both Christian and classical, as understood in Machiavelli's time. Morality had meant not only doing the right action, but also doing it for the right reason or for the love of God. Thus, to be good was thought to require "a profession of good" in which the motive for doing good was explained; otherwise, morality would go no deeper than outward conformity to law, or even to superior force, and could not be distinguished from it. But professions of good could not accompany moral actions in isolation from each other; they would have to be elaborated so that moral actions would be consistent with each other and the life of a moral person would form a whole. Such elaboration requires an effort of imagination, since the consistency we see tells us only of the presence of outward conformity, and the elaboration extends over a society, because it is difficult to live a moral life by oneself; hence morality requires the construction of an imagined republic or principality, such as Plato's *Republic* or St. Augustine's *City of God.*

When Machiavelli denies that imagined republics and principalities "exist in truth," and declares that the truth in these or all matters is the effectual truth, he says that no moral rules exist, not made by men, which men must abide by. The rules or laws that exist are those made by governments or other powers acting under necessity, and they must be obeyed out of the same necessity. Whatever is necessary may be called just and reasonable, but justice is no more reasonable than what a person's prudence tells him he must acquire for himself, or must submit to, because men cannot afford justice in any sense that transcends their own preservation. Machiavelli did not attempt (as did Hobbes) to formulate a new definition of justice based on self-preservation. Instead, he showed what he meant by not including justice among the eleven pairs of moral qualities that he lists in Chapter 15. He does mention justice in Chapter 21 as a calculation of what a weaker party might expect from a prince whom it has supported in war, but even this little is contradicted by what Machiavelli says about keeping faith in Chapter 18 and about betraying one's old supporters in Chapter 20. He also brings up justice as something identical with necessity in Chapter 26 But, what is most striking, he never mentions□not in *The Prince,* or in any of his works□natural justice or natural law, the two conceptions of justice in the classical and medieval tradition that had been handed down to his time and that could be found in the writings on this subject of all his contemporaries The grave issue raised by the dispute whether Machiavelli was truly "Machiavellian" is this: does justice exist by nature or by God, or is it the convenience of the prince (government)? "So let a prince win and maintain a state: the means will

always be judged honorable, and will be praised by everyone" (Chapter 18). Reputation, then, is outward conformity to successful human force and has no reference to moral rules that the government might find inconvenient.

If there is no natural justice, perhaps Machiavelli can teach the prince how to rule in its absence□but with a view to the fact that men "profess" it. It does not follow of necessity that because no natural justice exists, princes can rule successfully without it Governments might be as unsuccessful in making and keeping conquests as in living up to natural justice; indeed, the traditional proponents of natural justice, when less confident of their own cause, had pointed to the uncertainty of gain, to the happy inconstancy of fortune, as an argument against determined wickedness. But Machiavelli thinks it possible to "learn" to be able not to be good For each of the difficulties of gaining and keeping, even and especially for the fickleness of fortune, he has a "remedy," to use his frequent expression Since nature or God does not support human justice, men are in need of a remedy, and the remedy is the prince, especially the new prince. Why must the new prince be preferred?

In the heading to the first chapter of *The Prince* we see that the kinds of principalities are to be discussed together with the ways in which they are acquired, and then in the chapter itself we find more than this, that principalities are classified into kinds by the ways in which they are acquired. "Acquisition," an economic term, is Machiavelli's word for "conquest"; and acquisition determines the classifications of governments, not their ends or structures, as Plato and Aristotle had thought. How is acquisition related to the problem of justice"?

Justice requires a modest complement of external goods, the equipment of virtue in Aristotle's phrase, to keep the wolf from the door and to provide for moral persons a certain decent distance from necessities in the face of which morality might falter or even fail For how can one distribute justly without something to distribute"? But, then, where is one to get this modest complement? The easy way is by inheritance In Chapter 2, Machiavelli considers hereditary principalities, in which a person falls heir to everything he needs, especially the political power to protect what he has. The hereditary pnnce, the man who has everything, is called the "natural pnnce," as if to suggest that our grandest and most comprehensive inheritance is what we get from nature. But when the hereditary prince looks upon his inheritance□and when we, generalizing from his case, add up everything we inherit□is it adequate?

The difficulty with hereditary principalities is indicated at the end of Chapter 2, where Machiavelli admits that hereditary princes will have to change but claims that change will not be disruptive because it can be gradual and continuous. He compares each prince's own construction to building a house that is added on to a row of houses: you may not inherit all you need, but you inherit a firm support and an easy start in what you must acquire. But clearly a row of houses so built over generations presupposes that the first house was built without existing support and without an easy start Inheritance presupposes an original acquisition made without a previous inheritance. And in the original acquisition, full attention to the niceties of justice may unfortunately not be possible. One may congratulate an American citizen for all the advantages to which he

is born; but what of the nasty necessities that prepared this inheritance□the British expelled, Indians defrauded, blacks enslaved?

Machiavelli informs us in the third chapter, accordingly, that "truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire." In the space of a few pages, "natural" has shifted in meaning from hereditary to acquisitive Or can we be consoled by reference to Machiavelli's republicanism, not so prominent in *The Prince* with the thought that acquisitiveness may be natural to princes but is not natural to republics? But in Chapter 3 Machiavelli praises the successful acquisitiveness of the "Romans," that is, the Roman republic, by comparison to the imprudence of the king of France. At the time Machiavelli is referring to, the Romans were not weak and vulnerable as they were at their inception, they had grown powerful and were still expanding. Even when they had enough empire to provide an inheritance for their citizens, they went on acquiring. Was this reasonable? It was, because the haves of this world cannot quietly inherit what is coming to them; lest they be treated now as they once treated others, they must keep an eye on the have-nots. To keep a step ahead of the have-nots the haves must think and behave like have-nots. They certainly cannot afford justice to the have-nots, nor can they waste time or money on sympathy.

In the Dedicatory Letter Machiavelli presents himself to Lorenzo as a have-not, "from a low and mean state", and one thing he lacks besides honorable employment, we learn, is a unified fatherland. Italy is weak and divided. Then should we say that acquisitiveness is justified for Italians of Machiavelli's time, including him? As we have noted, Machiavelli does not seem to accept this justification because, still in Chapter 3, he advises a French king how to correct the errors he had made in his invasion of Italy. Besides, was Machiavelli's fatherland Italy or was it Florence? In Chapter 15 he refers to "our language," meaning Tuscan, and in Chapter 20 to "our ancients," meaning Florentines. But does it matter whether Machiavelli was essentially an Italian or a Florentine patriot? Anyone's fatherland is defined by an original acquisition, a conquest, and hence is always subject to redefinition of the same kind. To be devoted to one's native country at the expense of foreigners is no more justified than to be devoted to one's city at the expense of fellow countrymen, or to one's family at the expense of fellow city-dwellers, or, to adapt a Machiavellian remark in Chapter 17, to one's patrimony at the expense of one's father. So to "unify" one's fatherland means to treat it as a conquered territory□conquered by a king or republic from within; and Machiavelli's advice to the French king on how to hold his conquests in Italy was also advice to Lorenzo on how to unify Italy. It appears that, in acquiring, the new prince acquires for himself.

What are the qualities of the new prince? What must he do? First, as we have seen, he should rise from private or unprivileged status; he should not have an inheritance, or if he has, he should not rely on it. He should owe nothing to anyone or anything, for having debts of gratitude would make him dependent on others, in the widest sense dependent on fortune. It might seem that the new prince depends at least on the character of the country he conquers, and Machiavelli says at the end of Chapter 4 that Alexander had no trouble in holding Asia because it had been accustomed to the government of one lord. But then in Chapter 5 he shows how this limitation can be

overcome. A prince who conquers a city used to living in freedom need not respect its inherited liberties; he can and should destroy such cities or else rule them personally. Fortune supplies the prince with nothing more than opportunity, as when Moses found the people of Israel enslaved by the Egyptians, Romulus found himself exposed at birth, Cyrus found the Persians discontented with the empire of the Medes, and Theseus found the Athenians dispersed (Chapter 6). These famous founders had the virtue to recognize the opportunity that fortune offered to them□opportunity for them, harsh necessity to their peoples. Instead of dispersing the inhabitants of a free city (Chapter 5), the prince is lucky enough to find them dispersed (Chapter 6). This suggests that the prince could go so far as to make his own opportunity by creating a situation of necessity in which no one's inherited goods remain to him and everything is owed to you, the new prince. When a new prince comes to power, should he be grateful to those who helped him get power and rely on them? Indeed not. A new prince has "lukewarm defenders" in his friends and allies, because they expect benefits from him; as we have seen, it is much better to conciliate his former enemies who feared losing everything (compare Chapters 6 and 20).

Thus, the new prince has virtue that enables him to overcome his dependence on inheritance in the widest sense, including custom, nature, and fortune, and that shows him how to arrange it that others depend on him and his virtue (Chapters 9, 24). But if virtue is to do all this, it must have a new meaning. Instead of cooperating with nature or God, as in the various classical and Christian conceptions, virtue must be taught to be acquisitive on its own. Machiavelli teaches the new meaning of virtue by showing us both the new and the old meanings. In a famous passage on the successful criminal Agathocles in Chapter 8, he says "one cannot call it virtue to kill one's fellow citizens, betray one's friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion." Yet in the very next sentence Machiavelli proceeds to speak of "the virtue of Agathocles."

The prince, we have seen in Chapter 15, must "learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity." Machiavelli supplies this knowledge in Chapters 16 to 18. First, with superb calm, he delivers home-truths concerning the moral virtue of liberality. It is no use being liberal (or generous) unless it is noticed, so that you are "held liberal" or get a name for liberality. But a prince cannot be held liberal by being liberal, because he would have to be liberal to a few by burdening the many with taxes; the many would be offended, the prince would have to retrench, and he would soon get a name for stinginess. The right way to get a reputation for liberality is to begin by not caring about having a reputation for stinginess. When the people see that the prince gets the job done without burdening them, they will in time consider him liberal to them and stingy only to the few to whom he gives nothing. In the event, "liberality" comes to mean taking little rather than giving much.

As regards cruelty and mercy, in Chapter 8 Machiavelli made a distinction between cruelties well used and badly used; well-used cruelties are done once, for self-defense, and not continued but turned to the benefit of one's subjects, and badly used ones continue and increase. In Chapter 17, however, he does not mention this distinction but rather speaks only of using mercy badly. Mercy is badly used when, like the Florentine people in a certain instance, one seeks to avoid a reputation for cruelty and thus allows

disorders to continue which might be stopped with a very few examples of cruelty. Disorders harm everybody, executions harm only the few or the one who is executed. As the prince may gain a name for liberality by taking little, so he may be held merciful by not being cruel too often.

Machiavelli's new prince arranges the obligation of his subjects to himself in a manner rather like that of the Christian God, in the eye of whom all are guilty by original sin; hence God's mercy appears less as the granting of benefits than as the remission of punishment. With this thought in mind, the reader will not be surprised that Machiavelli goes on to discuss whether it is better for the prince to be loved or feared. It would be best to be both loved and feared, but, when necessity forces a choice, it is better to be feared, because men love at their convenience but they fear at the convenience of the prince. Friends may fail you, but the dread of punishment will never forsake you. If the prince avoids making himself hated, which he can do by abstaining from the property of others, "because men forget the death of a father more quickly than the loss of a patrimony," he will again have subjects obligated to him for what he does not do to them rather than for benefits he provides

It is laudable for a prince to keep faith, Machiavelli says in Chapter 18, but princes who have done great things have done them by deceit and betrayal. The prince must learn how to use the beast in man, or rather the beasts: for man is an animal who can be many animals, and he must know how to be a fox as well as a lion. Men will not keep faith with you; how can you keep it with them? Politics, Machiavelli seems to say, as much as consists in breaking promises, for circumstances change and new necessities arise that make it impossible to hold to one's word. The only question is, can one get away with breaking one's promises? Machiavelli's answer is a confident yes. He broadens the discussion, speaking of five moral qualities, especially religion; he says that men judge by appearances and that when one judges by appearances, "one looks to the end." The end is the outcome or the effect, and if a prince wins and maintains a state, the means will always be judged honorable. Since Machiavelli has just emphasized the prince's need to appear religious, we may compare the people's attitude toward a successful prince with their belief in divine providence. As people assume that the outcome of events in the world is determined by God's providence, so they conclude that the means chosen by God cannot have been unworthy. Machiavelli's thought here is both a subtle attack on the notion of divine providence and a subtle appreciation of it, insofar as the prince can appropriate it to his own use.

It is not easy to state exactly what virtue is, according to Machiavelli. Clearly he does not leave virtue as it was in the classical or Christian tradition, nor does he imitate any other writer of his time. Virtue in his new meaning seems to be a prudent or well-taught combination of vice and virtue in the old meaning. Virtue for him is not a mean between two extremes of vice, as is moral virtue for Aristotle. As we have seen, in Chapter 15 eleven virtues (the same number as Aristotle's, though not all of them the same virtues) are paired with eleven vices. From this we might conclude that virtue does not shine of itself, as when it is done for its own sake. Rather, virtue is as it takes effect, its truth is its effectual truth; and it is effectual only when it is seen in contrast to its opposite. Liberality, mercy, and love are impressive only when one expects stinginess (or

rapacity), cruelty, and fear. This contrast makes virtue apparent and enables the prince to gain a reputation for virtue. If this is so, then the new meaning Machiavelli gives to virtue, a meaning which makes use of vice, must not entirely replace but somehow continue to coexist with the old meaning, according to which virtue is shocked by vice.

A third quality of the new prince is that he must make his own foundations. Although to be acquisitive means to be acquisitive for oneself, the prince cannot do everything with his own hands: he needs help from others. But in seeking help he must take account of the "two diverse humors" to be found in every city□the people, who desire not to be commanded or oppressed by the great, and the great, who desire to command and oppress the people (Chapter 9). Of these two humors, the prince should choose the people. The people are easier to satisfy, too inert to move against him, and too numerous to kill, whereas the great regard themselves as his equals, are ready and able to conspire against him, and are replaceable.

The prince, then, should ally with the people against the aristocracy; but how should he get their support? Machiavelli gives an example in the conduct of Cesare Borgia, whom he praises for the foundations he laid (Chapter 73). When Cesare had conquered the province of Romagna, he installed "Remirro de Oreo" (actually a Spaniard, Don Remiro de Lorqua) to carry out a purge of the unruly lords there. Then, because Cesare thought Remirro's authority might be excessive, and his exercise of it might become hateful□in short, because Remirro had served his purpose□he purged the purger and one day had Remirro displayed in the piazza at Cesena in two pieces. This spectacle left the people "at the same time satisfied and stupefied"; and Cesare set up a more constitutional government in Romagna. The lesson: constitutional government is possible but only after an unconstitutional beginning. In Chapter 9 Machiavelli discusses the "civil principality," which is gained through the favor of the people, and gives as example Nabis, "prince" of the Spartans, whom he calls a tyrant in the *Discourses on Livy* because of the crimes Nabis committed against his rivals. In Chapter 8 Machiavelli considers the principality that is attained through crimes, and cites Agathocles and Oliverotto, both of whom were very popular despite their crimes. As one ponders these two chapters, it becomes more and more difficult to find a difference between gaining a principality through crimes and through the favor of the people. Surely Cesare Borgia, Agathocles, and Nabis seemed to have followed the same policy of pleasing the people by cutting up the great. Finally, in Chapter 19, Machiavelli reveals that the prince need not have the support of the people after all. Even if he is hated by the people (since in fact he cannot fail to be hated by someone), he can, like the Roman emperor Severus, make his foundation with his soldiers (see also Chapter 20). Severus had such virtue, Machiavelli says, with an unobstrusive comparison to Cesare Borgia in Chapter 7, that he "stupefied" the people and "satisfied" the soldiers.

Fourth, the new prince has his own arms, and does not rely on mercenary or auxiliary armies Machiavelli omits a discussion of the laws a prince should establish, in contrast to the tradition of political science, because, he says, "there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws" (Chapter 12). He speaks of the prince's arms in Chapters 12 to 14, and in Chapter 14 he proclaims that the prince should have no other object or thought but the art of war.

He must be armed, since it is quite unreasonable for one who is armed to obey one who is disarmed. With this short remark Machiavelli seems to dismiss the fundamental principle of classical political science, the rule of the wise, not to mention the Christian promise that the meek shall inherit the earth.

Machiavelli does not mean that those with the most bodily force always win, for he broadens the art of war to include the acquisition as well as the use of arms. A prince who has no army but has the art of war will prevail over one with an army but without the art. Thus, to be armed means to know the art of war, to exercise it in time of peace, and to have read histories about great captains of the past. In this regard Machiavelli mentions Xenophon's "Life of Cyrus," as he calls it (actually "The Education of Cyrus"), the first and best work in the literature of "mirrors of princes" to which *The Prince* belongs. But he calls it a history, not a mirror of princes, and says that it inspired the Roman general Scipio, whom he criticizes in Chapter 17 for excessive mercy. Not books of imaginary republics and principalities, or treatises on law, but histories of war, are recommended reading for the prince.

Last, the new prince with his own arms is his own master. The deeper meaning of Machiavelli's slogan, "one's own arms," is religious, or rather, anti religious. If man is obligated to God as his creature, then man's own necessities are subordinate or even irrelevant to his most pressing duties. It would not matter if he could not afford justice: God commands it! Thus Machiavelli must look at the new prince who is also a prophet, above all at Moses.

Moses was a "mere executor of things that had been ordered by God" (Chapter 6); hence he should be admired for the grace that made him worthy of speaking with God. Or should it be said, as Machiavelli says in Chapter 26, that Moses had "virtue," the virtue that makes a prince dependent on no one but himself? In Chapter 13 Machiavelli retells the biblical story of David and Goliath to illustrate the necessity of one's own arms When Saul offered his arms to David, David refused them, saying, according to Machiavelli, that with them he could not give a good account of himself, and according to the Bible, that the Lord "will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" Machiavelli also gives David a knife to go with bis sling, the knife which according to the Bible he took from the fallen Goliath and used to cut off his head.

Must the new prince□the truly new prince□ then be his own prophet and make a new religion so as to be his own master"? The great power of religion can be seen in what Moses and David founded, and in what Savonarola nearly accomplished in Machiavelli's own time and city The unarmed prince whom he disparages in Chapter 6 actually disposes of formidable weapons necessary to the art of war. The unarmed prophet becomes armed if he uses religion for his own purposes rather than God's; and because the pnnce cannot acquire glory for himself without bringing order to his principality, using religion for himself is using it to answer human necessities generally.

The last three chapters of *The Prince* take up the question of how far man can make his own world. What are the limits set on Machiavelli's political science (or the "art of war") by fortune? At the end of Chapter 24 he blames "these princes of ours" who accuse

fortune for their troubles and not their own indolence In quiet times they do not take account of the storm to come. But they should□ they can They believe that the people will be disgusted by the arrogance of the foreign conquerors and will call them back. But "one should never fall in the belief you can find someone to pick you up." Whether successful or not, such a defense is base, because it does not depend on you and your virtue.

With this high promise of human capability, Machiavelli introduces his famous Chapter 25 on fortune. He begins it by asking how much of the world is governed by fortune and God, and how much by man. He then supposes that half is governed by fortune (forgetting God) and half by man, and he compares fortune to a violent river that can be contained with dikes and dams. Turning to particular men, he shows that the difficulty in containing fortunes lies in the inability of one who is impetuous to succeed in quiet times or of one who is cautious to succeed in stormy times. Men, with their fixed natures and habits, do not vary as the times vary, and so they fall under the control of the times, of fortune. Men's fixed natures are the special problem Machiavelli indicates; so the problem of overcoming the influence of fortune reduces to the problem of overcoming the fixity of different human natures. Having a fixed nature is what makes one liable to changes of fortune. Pope Julius II succeeded because the times were in accord with his impetuous nature; if he had lived longer, he would have come to grief. Machiavelli blames him for his inflexibility, and so implies that neither he nor the rest of us need respect the natures or natural inclinations we have been given

What is the new meaning of virtue that Machiavelli has developed but flexibility according to the times or situation'? Yet, though one should learn to be both impetuous and cautious (these stand for all the other contrary qualities), on the whole one should be impetuous. Fortune is a woman who "lets herself be won more by the impetuous than by those who proceed coldly"; hence she is a friend of the young. He makes the politics of the new prince appear in the image of rape; impetuous himself, Machiavelli forces us to see the question he has raised about the status of morality. Whether he says what he appears to say about the status of women may be doubted, however. The young men who master Lady Fortune come with audacity and leave exhausted, but she remains ageless, waiting for the next ones. One might go so far as to wonder who is raping whom, cautiously as it were, and whether Machiavelli, who has personified fortune, can impersonate her in the world of modern politics he attempted to create.

Source: Harvey C. Mansfield Jr., m an introduction to *The Pnnce,* by Niccolo Machiavelli, translated by Harvey C Mansfield, Jr, The University of Chicago Press, 1985, pp **V11-XX1V**

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Mattingly proposes that The Prince *be interpreted as a satire.*

The notion that this little book *[The Prince]* was meant as a serious, scientific treatise on government contradicts everything we know about Machiavelli's life, about his writings, and about the history of his time.

In the first place, this proposition asks us to believe that Niccolo Machiavelli deliberately wrote a handbook meant to help a tyrant rule the once free people of Florence....

He has left proof of his devotion in the record of his activities and in the state papers in which he spun endless schemes for the defense and aggrandizement of the republic, and constantly preached the same to his superiors. One characteristic quotation is irresistible. The subject is an increase in the defense budget that Machiavelli's masters were reluctant to vote. He reminds them with mounting impatience that only strong states are respected by their neighbors and that their neglect of military strength in the recent past has cost them dear, and he ends with anything but detached calm:

Other people learn from the penis of their neighbors, you will not even learn from your own, nor trust yourselves, nor recognize the time you are losing and have lost. I tell you fortune will not alter the sentence it has pronounced unless you alter your behavior Heaven will not and cannot preserve those bent on their own rum But I cannot believe it will come to this, seeing that you are free Florentines and have your liberty in your own hands. In the end I believe you will have the same regard for your freedom that men always have who are born free and desire to live free.

Only a man who cared deeply for the independence of his city would use language like this to his employers. But Machiavelli gave an even more impressive proof of his disinterested patriotism. After fourteen years in high office, in a place where the opportunities for dipping into the public purse and into the pockets of his compatriots and of those foreigners he did business with were practically unlimited (among other duties he acted as paymaster-general of the army), Machiavelli retired from public life as poor as when he had entered it. Later he was to refer to this record with pride, but also with a kind of rueful astonishment, and, indeed, if this was not a unique feat in his day, it was a very rare one....

Machiavelli emerged from prison in mid-March, 1513. Most people believe that *The Prince* was finished by December. I suppose it is possible to imagine that a man who has seen his country enslaved, his life's work wrecked and his own career with it, and has, for good measure, been tortured within an inch of his life should thereupon go home and write a book intended to teach his enemies the proper way to maintain themselves, writing all the time, remember, with the passionless objectivity of a scientist in a laboratory. It must be possible to imagine such behavior, because Machiavelli scholars do imagine it and accept it without a visible tremor But it is a little difficult for the ordinary mind to compass.

The difficulty is increased by the fact that this acceptance of tyranny seems to have been a passing phase. Throughout the rest of his life Machiavelli wrote as a republican and moved mainly in republican circles....

The notion that *The Prince* is what it pretends to be, a scientific manual for tyrants, has to contend not only against Machiavelli's life but against his writings, as, of course, everyone who wants to use *The Prince* as a centerpiece in an exposition of Machiavelli's political thought has recognized Ever since Herder, the standard explanation has been that in the corrupt conditions of sixteenth-century Italy only a prince could create a strong state capable of expansion. The trouble with this is that it was chiefly because they widened their boundaries that Machiavelli preferred republics. In the *Discorsi* he wrote,

We know by experience that states have never signally increased either in territory or in riches except under a free government. The cause is not far to seek, since it is the well-being not of individuals but of the community which makes the state great, and without question this universal well-being is nowhere secured save in a republic.... Popular rule is always better than the rule of princes.

This is not just a casual remark. It is the main theme of the *Discorsi* and the basic assumption of all but one of Machiavelli's writings, as it was the basic assumption of his political career.

There is another way in which *The Prince* is a puzzling anomaly. In practically everything else Machiavelli wrote, he displayed the sensitivity and tact of the developed literary temperament He was delicately aware of the tastes and probable reactions of his public. No one could have written that magnificent satiric soliloquy of Fra Timotheo in *Mandragola,* for instance, who had not an instinctive feeling for the response of an audience. But the effect of the publication of *The Prince* on the first several generations of its readers in Italy (outside of Florence) and in the rest of Europe was shock. It horrified, repelled and fascinated like a Medusa's head, A large part of the shock was caused, of course, by the cynical immorality of some of the proposals, but instead of appeasing revulsion and insinuating his new proposals as delicately as possible, Machiavelli seems to delight in intensifying the shock and deliberately employing devices to heighten it. Of these not the least effective is the way *The Prince* imitates, almost parodies, one of the best known and most respected literary forms of the three preceding centuries, the handbook of advice to princes. This literary type was enormously popular. Its exemplars ran into the hundreds of titles of which a few, like St. Thomas' *De Regno* and Erasmus' *Institutio principis chris-tiam* are not quite unknown today In some ways, Machiavelli's little treatise was just like all the other "Mirrors of Princes"; in other ways it was a diabolical burlesque of all of them, like a political Black Mass.

The shock was intensified again because Machiavelli deliberately addressed himself primarily to princes who have newly acquired their principalities and do not owe them either to inheritance or to the free choice of their countrymen. The short and ugly word for this kind of prince is "tyrant." Machiavelli never quite uses the word except in

illustrations from classical antiquity, but he seems to delight in dancing all around it until even the dullest of his readers could not mistake his meaning. Opinions about the relative merits of republics and monarchies varied during the Renaissance, depending mainly upon where one lived, but about tyrants there was only one opinion. Cnstoforo Landino, Lorenzo the Magnificent's teacher and client, stated the usual view in his commentary on Dante, written when Niccolo Machiavelli was a child. When he came to comment on Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of hell, Landino wrote:

Surely it was extraordinary cruelty to inflict such severe punishment on those who faced death to deliver their country from slavery, a deed for which, if they had been Christians, they would have merited the most honored seats in the highest heaven If we consult the laws of any well-constituted republic, we shall find them to decree no greater reward to anyone than to the man who kills the tyrant.

So said the Italian Renaissance with almost unanimous voice. If Machiavelli's friends were meant to read the manuscript of *The Prince* and if they took it at face value□an objective study of how to be a successful tyrant offered as advice to a member of the species□they can hardly have failed to be deeply shocked And if the manuscnpt was meant for the eye of young Giuliano de Medici alone, he can hardly have been pleased to find it blandly assumed that he was one of a class of whom his father's tutor had written that the highest duty of a good citizen was to kill them.

The literary fame of *The Prince* is due, precisely, to its shocking quality, so if the book was seriously meant as a scientific manual, it owes its literary reputation to an artistic blunder.

Perhaps nobody should be rash enough today to call *The Prince* a satire, not in the teeth of all the learned opinion to the contrary. But when one comes to think of it, what excellent sense the idea makes! However you define "satire"□and I understand that critics are still without a thoroughly satisfactory definition□it must include the intention to denounce, expose or deride someone or something, and it is to be distinguished from mere didactic condemnation and invective (when it can be distinguished at all) by the employment of such devices as irony, sarcasm and ridicule. It need not be provocative of laughter, I doubt whether many people ever laughed or even smiled at the adventures of Gulliver among the Yahoos. And though satire admits of, and in fact always employs, exaggeration and overemphasis, the author, to be effective, must not appear to be, and in fact need not be, conscious that this is so. When Dryden wrote, "The rest to some faint meaning make pretense / But Shadwell never deviates into sense," he may have been conscious of some overstatement, but he was conveying his considered criticism of Shad-well's poetry. And when Pope called "Lord Fanny" "this painted child of dirt that stinks and strings," the language may be violent, but who can doubt that this is how Pope felt. Indeed the satirist seems to put forth his greatest powers chiefly when goaded by anger, hatred and savage indignation. If Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* out of the fullness of these emotions rather than out of the dispassionate curiosity of the scientist or out of a base willingness to toady to the destroyers of his country's liberty, then one can understand why the sentences crack like a whip, why the words bite and

bum like acid, and why the whole style has a density and impact unique among his writings.

To read *The Prince* as satire not only clears up puzzles and resolves contradictions; it gives a new dimension and meaning to passages unremarkable before. Take the place in the dedication that runs "just as those who paint landscapes must seat themselves below in the plains to see the mountains, and high in the mountains to see the plains, so to understand the nature of the people one must be a prince, and to understand the nature a prince, one must be one of the people." In the usual view, this is a mere rhetorical flourish, but the irony, once sought, is easy to discover, for Machiavelli, in fact, takes both positions. The people can only see the prince as, by nature and necessity, false, cruel, mean and hypocritical. The prince, from his lofty but precarious perch, dare not see the people as other than they are described in Chapter Seventeen: "ungrateful, fickle, treacherous, cowardly and greedy. As long as you succeed they are yours entirely. They will offer you their blood, property, lives and children when you do not need them. When you do need them, they will turn against you." Probably Machiavelli really believed that this, or something like it, happened to the human nature of a tyrant and his subjects. But the view, like its expression, is something less than objective and dispassionate, and the only lesson it has for princes would seem to be: "Run for your life!"

Considering the brevity of the book, the number of times its princely reader is reminded, as in the passage just quoted, that his people will overthrow him at last is quite remarkable. Cities ruled in the past by princes easily accustom themselves to a change of masters, Machiavelli says in Chapter Five, but "in republics there is more vitality, greater hatred and more desire for vengeance. They cannot forget their lost liberty, so that the safest way is to destroy them□or to live there." He does not say what makes that safe. And most notably, with savage irony, "the duke [Borgia] was so able and laid such firm foundations ... that the Romagna [after Alexander VI's death] waited for him more than a month." This is as much as to put Leo X's brother on notice that without papal support he can expect short shrift. If the Romagna, accustomed to tyranny, waited only a month before it rose in revolt, how long will Florence wait'? Tactlessness like this is unintelligible unless it is deliberate, unless these are not pedantic blunders but sarcastic ironies, taunts flung at the Medici, incitements to the Florentines.

Only in a satire can one understand the choice of Cesare Borgia as the model prince. The common people of Tuscany could not have had what they could expect of a prince's rule made clearer than by the example of this bloodstained buffoon whose vices, crimes and follies had been the scandal of Italy, and the conduct of whose brutal, undisciplined troops had so infuriated the Tuscans that when another band of them crossed their frontier, the peasants fell upon them and tore them to pieces. The Florentine aristocrats on whom Giovanni and cousin Giulio were relying to bridge the transition to despotism would have shared the people's revulsion to Cesare, and they may have been rendered somewhat more thoughtful by the logic of the assumption that nobles were more dangerous to a tyrant than commoners and should be dealt with as Cesare had dealt with the petty lords of the Romagna. Moreover, they could scarcely have avoided noticing the advice to use some faithful servant to terrorize the rest, and

then to sacrifice him to escape the obloquy of his conduct, as Cesare had sacrificed Captain Ramiro. As for the gentle, mild-mannered, indolent Giuliano de Medici himself, he was the last man to be attracted by the notion of imitating the Borgia. He wanted no more than to occupy the same social position in Florence that his magnificent father had held, and not even that if it was too much trouble.

Besides, in the days of the family's misfortunes, Giuliano had found shelter and hospitality at the court of Guidobaldo de Montrefeltre Guiliano lived at Urbino for many years (there is a rather charming picture of him there in Castiglione's *II Cortegiano),* and all his life he cherished deep gratitude and a strong affection for Duke Guidobaldo He must have felt, then, a special loathing for the foreign ruffian who had betrayed and plundered his patron, and Machiavelli must have known that he did. Only a wish to draw the most odious comparison possible, only a compulsion to wound and insult, could have led Machiavelli to select the Borgia as the prime exemplar in his "Mirror of Princes."

There is one last famous passage that reads differently if we accept *The Prince* as satire. On any other hypothesis, the final exhortation to free Italy from the barbarians sounds at best like empty rhetoric, at worst like calculating but stupid flattery. Who could really believe that the lazy, insipid Giuliano or his petty, vicious successor were the liberators Italy awaited? But if we have heard the mordant irony and sarcasm of the preceding chapters and detected the overtones of hatred and despair, then this last chapter will be charged with an irony turned inward, the bitter mockery of misdirected optimism. For before the Florentine republic had been gored to death by Spanish pikes, Machiavelli had believed, as he was to believe again, that a free Florentine republic could play the liberator's role Perhaps, since he was all his life a passionate idealist, blind to reality when his desires were strong, Machiavelli may not have given up that wild hope even when he wrote *The Prince.*

Source: Garrett Mattmgly, "Machiavelh's *Prince* Political Science or Political Satire'," in *The American Scholar,* Vol. 27, No 4, Autumn, 1958, pp 482-91.

Adaptations

The Prince is available in a four-audiocassette version from Penguin Audiobooks, read by Fritz Weaver.

An examination of Machiavelli's life and writings entitled *The Prince: Niccolo Machiavelli,* is available on an audiocassette from Knowledge Products of Nashville, Tennessee.

Topics for Further Study

Choose a candidate from a recent United States presidential election. Analyze this candidate from a Machiavellian perspective. Does this person adhere to the Machiavellian philosophy? Or do they break his rules? Provide specific examples.

Machiavelli makes no mention of the fact that during his lifetime some of history's greatest art was being produced in his hometown, Florence. Read about Florentine art during the Renaissance, and explain how the political situation contributed to the artistic situation at the time.

The adjective "Machiavellian" is often used to describe rulers who are ruthless and deceptive. Research Adolph Hitler's rise and fall as leader of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Write a letter from Machiavelli to Adolph Hitler explaining why he lost World War II.

Machiavelli almost never mentions women. Pick a novel that has female characters, and analyze the female characters in Machiavellian terms. They may not be leaders of countries, but do they act according to Machiavellian principles? Use specific examples from the novel.

Compare and Contrast

1500s: Renaissance thinkers, like Machiavelli, emphasize logic and rational pragmatism over religious ethics in political analysis

Today: Political campaigns are driven more and more by advertising and market research. This allows candidates to support only popular positions, often to the chagrin of voters who doubt the morality and ethics of political candidates.

1534: Giulio de Medici becomes the first in a long succession of Italian popes.

Today: Elected in 1978, Pope John Paul II remains the preeminent Roman Catholic leader. He was the first Polish priest to be chosen for the position, ending an uninterrupted line of Italian popes.

1513: Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus begins writing his major work, *De Revolutwn-ibus Orbium Coelestium* Published after his death in 1543, it proposes that planets revolve around the sun.

1633: Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei supports Copernicus' theories As a result, he is jailed because the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Earth is the center of the universe.

Today: It is accepted as fact the planets revolve around the sun

What Do I Read Next?

A seminal philosophical work on the nature of politics, *Politics* was written by the Greek philosopher Aristotle after 335 B.C.

Machiavelh's view of the world is applied to the modern political scene in Michael A. Ledeen's *Machiavelli On Modern Leadership. Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules are as Timely and Important Today As Five Centuries Ago* (1999).

Giorgio Vasari was a painter during the Renaissance. First published in 1550, his book *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Artists* reminisces about his acquaintances with many of the key artists who lived in Florence during Machi-avelli's time, including Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Brunnelleschi.

Jacob Burckhardt, a Swiss historian whose writings changed the way historians looked at the past, ushered in a new perspective on the Renaissance period. His 1860 book *A History of Italy in the Renaissance* is a groundbreaking work that introduces readers to Machiavelli, the Medici family, and many other key figures of the time.

Further Study

Stanley Bing, *What Would Machiavelli Do?,* Harperbusi-ness, 2000, 160 p.

Bing satirically applies Machiavellian principles to contemporary corporate culture.

Sebastian de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell,* Princeton University Press, 1989, 497 p

Biographical study that examines Machiavelli's life in terms of the ideas presented in *The Prince*

Harvey C Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue,* The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 371 p.

Mansfield provides an insightful analysis of Machiavelli's concept of virtue

Vespasiano, *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates- The Vespasiano Memoirs,* Harper and Row Torchbooks, 1963, 475 p

These memoirs, which were kept in the Vatican library and studied only by scholars until the nineteenth century, provide readers with the background of Machiavelli's political career

Bibliography

Sidney Anglo, *Machmvelli-A Dissertation,* Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969

Lord Macaulay Thomas Babington, *Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays,* Sheldon and Company, 1862, pp. 267-320.

Lord Acton John Emerich Dalberg-Acton, "Introduction," in *II Prmcipo* by Niccolo Machiavelli, edited by L Arthur Burd, Clarenon Press, 1891, pp. xix-xi

Richard Harvey, *A Theological Discourse of the Lamb of God and His Enemies,* n p , 1590, pp. 93-9.

Garrett Mattingly, "Machiavelli's *Prince.* Political Science or Political Satire1?" in *The American Scholar,* Vol 27, No 4, Autumn, 1958, pp. 482-91

John McCormick, "Winning a Gang War," in *Newsweek,* November 1, 1999, 46-9.

Leo B. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp 54-84.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels 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 Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

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

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

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

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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