The Producers Study Guide

The Producers by Mel Brooks

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Introduction

Mel Brooks adapted his Broadway musical *The Producers* from his own 1968 movie of the same name. The film was only a modest success, but it did win the Academy Award for best original screenplay. Over the course of more than thirty years it became a cult classic, with legions of devoted fans who knew the script line-for-line. The musical, on the other hand, was a phenomenon from its beginning. At the 2001 Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Awards, it took twelve statues□the most ever won by any Broadway show. The show sold millions of dollars in tickets before it even opened and continued to sell tickets for dates years into the future. In the months after the destruction of the World Trade Center, when the entertainment world in New York City was devastated by huge financial losses due to audience uncertainty, the unstoppable popularity of *The Producers* is sometimes credited with saving Broadway.

The story concerns Max Bialystock, a washed-up Broadway producer, and Leo Bloom, a meek accountant who comes to do his books. When Bloom casually notes that a producer could make more money on a show that failed, because the show's investors would never have to be paid back, Bialystock thinks up a plan to gain them millions. They set about looking for the worst Broadway show imaginable, settling on *Springtime for Hitler, A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva at Berchtesgaden*. They then enlist a flamboyant gay producer, assuming that he can make the show even more unbearable.

The Producers is populated with colorful characters and enlivened with witty songs filled with sly cultural references. It also relies heavily on crass and obvious stereotypes meant to offend all equally, with mincing gays, sex-object women, greedy Jews, bubble-headed Swedes, oversexed old ladies, gruff Irish cops, and kick lines of singing Nazis.

Author Biography

Mel Brooks was born Melvyn Kaminsky in Brooklyn, New York, on June 28, 1926. He lived in Brooklyn until joining the army during World War II. In the army, he performed in troop revues. When he returned to the United States, he worked as a stand-up comic for a short time at resorts in the Catskill Mountains, where many New York comedians went to hone their skills. Brooks took a job writing for the legendary television program *Your Show of Shows*, with other writers that included Carl Reiner, Woody Allan, and Neil Simon. He went with the star of the show, Sid Caesar, to his follow-up program, *Caesar's Hour*. After winning an Emmy award for his writing, Brooks struck out to produce and direct his own works. He and Reiner had some success in the early 1960s with their character *The 2000 Year Old Man*, which spawned a hit comedy album and led to a series of concert engagements.

In 1964 Brooks married Anne Bancroft, a famous film and stage actress. Their marriage has lasted for over forty years. In 1965 he wrote and produced, along with Buck Henry, the situation comedy *Get Smart*, which ran on network television for five years.

Brooks's first film was a short independent work called *The Critic*. His second film, in 1968, was *The Producers*, for which he won an Oscar for best original screenplay. In 1974 he created what many consider to be his greatest comedy, *Blazing Saddles*, a spoof of westerns. That began a golden age for him, with a series of popular film parodies: *Young Frankenstein* in 1974, which played off of the Universal monster movies of the 1930s; *Silent Movie* in 1977, a tribute to the silent era of film; and *High Anxiety* in 1977, which parodies the films of director Alfred Hitchcock. Brooks's comedies in the 1980s and 1990s were considered uneven in quality and were poorly received by audiences, although 1987's *Spaceballs* was so popular that studios considered producing a sequel, but Brooks dropped the idea.

Brooks has also been influential as a producer in Hollywood. In addition to his own films, his production company, Brooksfilms Limited, has backed such critically acclaimed films as *84 Charring Cross Road*, *Frances*, and *The Elephant Man*.

Brooks has often written songs for his own films, such as the original "Springtime for Hitler" number for the 1968 film of *The Producers*, but he never considered writing for the stage until David Geffin, one of the founders of Dreamworks SKG studio, urged him to adapt his movie. His work has earned Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Awards for the play's music and for co-writing the book with Thomas Meehan, a longtime collaborator who is best known for writing the book for *Annie*.

Plot Summary

Act 1, Scene 1

The first scene of *The Producers* takes place outside of the Schubert Theater on Broadway on a June evening in 1959, where Max Bialystock's latest show, *Funny Boy*!, has just opened. A musical version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the show is closing that night, reviled by critics who could not even stay to the end. Bialystock sings a song about how famous and successful he once was.

Act 1, Scene 2

Leo Bloom, a mild accountant, shows up at Bialystock's office to do his bookkeeping. One of Bialystock's backers, an amorous old lady, comes in, and Bloom is forced to hide. After she leaves, Bloom finds a discrepancy in the account but decides that it does not matter since the show closed early, and investors will not expect any money back. Bloom idly mentions that a producer could make more with a failure than with a hit, because he could sell unlimited shares and keep all of the money. Bialystock tries to convince him that they should become rich doing just that, but Bloom is too timid to break the law.

Act 1, Scene 3

At Whitehall and Marks, the office where Bloom works, the accountants sing about how unhappy their lives are. Mr. Marks shouts at Bloom for coming in six minutes late, sending Bloom into a fantasy about what it would be like to be a producer, surrounded by beautiful chorus girls. At the end of his reverie, Bloom quits his job.

Act 1, Scene 4

Bloom returns to Bialystock and explains his decision to join in his production scheme.

Act 1, Scene 5

Bialystock and Bloom search through stacks of scripts, looking for one that is guaranteed to be a flop. The winner is *Springtime for Hitler*, a light-hearted look at the dictator who was responsible for the Holocaust. Bialystock takes out two hats and puts on one, but he refuses to let Bloom wear the other: these are "producer" hats, he explains, and Bloom is not a real producer until the show opens.

Act 1, Scene 6

On the roof of the Greenwich Village building he lives in, Franz Liebkind, wearing a Nazi helmet and lederhosen, sings about how lonesome he is in America, accompanied in his song by the pigeons that he keeps in cages. Bialystock and Bloom arrive to obtain the rights for *Springtime for Hitler*, which Liebkind wrote. Liebkind is excited about their interest in his play, but refuses to let them produce it unless they take "the Siegfried Oath," pledging their allegiance to Hitler. Bloom wants to leave, but Bialystock convinces him to take the oath and to put on the swastika armband Liebkind gives them.

Act 1, Scene 7

They are let into the apartment of Roger De Bris, a particularly untalented director, by De Bris's assistant, Carmen Ghia. De Bris enters in a gown, which he plans to wear to the Choreographers' Ball. He is hesitant about directing *Springtime for Hitler* because it is so serious, and asks for advice from his "production team": a group of outrageously gay stereotypes who parade through the living room. Bialystock convinces De Bris that he could win a Tony Award for doing a serious drama, and De Bris agrees to direct the show.

Act 1, Scene 8

Ulla arrives at Bialystock's office. She is a tall, shapely Swedish blonde bombshell with a thick accent that makes her words barely intelligible. Both men are smitten with her sensuality and want to hire her, though the show is not in rehearsals yet. They end up asking her to work as a secretary until the show opens, and she agrees. Bialystock decides that he has to go to his "investors"□a group of little old ladies who give him money for his plays as long as he has sex with them.

Act 1, Scene 9

This scene takes place in "Little Old Lady Land," populated by chorus lines of old ladies with walkers and canes, who Bialystock sweet-talks in song. When he has collected two million dollars, he goes back to Bloom and tells him that they are ready to put the play on. All of the important characters□Ulla, Roger De Bris, Carmen Ghia and Franz Liebkind□come on stage for a rousing song to end act 1.

Act 2, Scene 1

Bialystock and Bloom return to their office to find that Ulla has cleaned it and painted it white, entirely changing its dismal look. Bialystock leaves, and Ulla and Bloom, left alone, dance and sing a duet that shows that they are in love with each other.

Act 2, Scene 2

At the theater, auditions take place for *Springtime for Hitler*, with a succession of inappropriate actors showing up and performing unlikely material in Hitler costumes. Franz Liebkind finally interrupts to show how it should be done, and Bialystock realizes that, with his over-earnestness, he would be the perfect actor to play the part.

Act 2, Scene 3

Outside of the Schubert Theatre on West 44th Street, the same setting as act 1, scene 1, people are arriving for the *Springtime for Hitler* opening. Bloom wishes everybody good luck to the horror of all. They explain to him that according to Broadway superstition wishing good luck will only bring bad luck. He asks what he should say instead, and they tell him, "Break a leg." When Bloom says that, Liebkind trips walking to the stage door and breaks his leg. For a moment, it looks as if the show must be cancelled, but Bialystock asks Roger De Bris to take the role of Hitler.

Act 2, Scene 4

The musical production of "Springtime for Hitler" is garishly inappropriate, with glamorous dancers and glorious songs celebrating the Führer.

Act 2, Scene 5

Back at the office, Bialystock and Bloom realize that the show is a hit with the critics and that their plan is ruined. Bloom wants to take the two sets of accounting ledgers he kept to the police and turn himself in, and he and Bialystock fight over the account ledgers. De Bris and Carmen Ghia come in, and then Liebkind comes in, brandishing a pistol, angry because the effeminate De Bris made Hitler look foolish. He fires a few times before the police show up. While arresting Liebkind, the police notice the two sets of books and take Bialystock away to jail as well. But Bloom, hidden behind a door, escapes notice. He leaves for Rio de Janeiro with Ulla and the two million dollars.

Act 2, Scene 6

In jail, Bialystock receives a post card from Rio and feels betrayed, singing a song about all that has happened.

Act 2, Scene 7

Bialystock is about to be sentenced in court when Bloom and Ulla return. Bloom gives back the money, the old ladies admit they did not mind being cheated, and Bialystock and Bloom sing a song about what true friends they have found in each other.

Act 2, Scene 8

In prison, Bialystock, Bloom, Liebkind, and other prisoners sing and dance through a new show, *Prisoners of Love*. A guard comes in with the news that the governor has pardoned Bialystock and Bloom because of the laughter and joy they have brought to the convicts.

Act 2, Scene 9

In front of the Schubert Theatre again, the marquee says, "Bialystock and Bloom present 'Prisoners of Love.'" A large production number takes place, with male and female chorus dancers in prison stripes.

Act 2, Scene 10

Bialystock and Bloom, in tuxedos and their producer hats, come out to sing a song about their success, friendship, and ongoing partnership.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The Producers is Mel Brooks' musical about a weary Broadway producer, Max Bialystock, and a repressed accountant, Leo Bloom, who team up in shared greed to fraudulently make two million dollars through the production of an intentionally poor quality musical. When the show is an unexpected success and Bialystock and Bloom are found guilty of illegal practices, the two men find that the true value in life is the loyalty of a good friend.

The musical is based on Brooks' film by the same name released in 1968 which won an Academy Award for best original screenplay.

The musical opens at the end of an overture. The first takes place in an alley outside the Schubert Theatre at 10:30 p.m. on a night in June, 1959. The theatre marquee advertises a Max Bialystock presentation of *Funny Boy*, the musical adaptation of *Hamlet.* Two usherettes appear and sing about the opening and closing of the musical in one night. Soon, members of the audience exit the theatre and sing about the fact that Max Bialystock has managed to produce yet another flop.

The usherettes and audience members exit, and Max Bialystock enters the stage, his face obscured by a newspaper containing the reviews of this night's theatrical disaster. Bialystock is described as a man in his fifties, a little overweight and dressed in evening clothes, which have seen better times. Max's overall dishevelment mirrors his deflated mood and ego.

Max is joined onstage by others; such as, a newsman, blind violinist, bag lady, bum and a street cleaner. They join Max in singing a song about how he used to be the King of Broadway. There had been a time when everything Max touched turned to gold, and he is now facing a seemingly unending losing streak.

As the song laments loss of fine clothes and champagne, Max begins to feel the stirrings of confidence again. He vows to be a winner again, one day.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Brooks establishes Max's huge ego and his love of performance in the first act. There is also the theme of eternal optimism, as Max rallies at the end of the act, while vowing to be on top of the world again and regain his title of King of Broadway. Ironically, the entertainment business demands nerves of steel and feelings oblivious to any attack, characteristics which most performers and entertainment industry professionals do not have. In fact, it is normally the qualities of sensitivity and vulnerability that produce the best performances. Max has qualities from both ends of this spectrum, which make him

an interesting character to watch. It's inevitably interesting to see how his character evolves.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

This scene opens in Max's rundown office, cluttered with theatre paraphernalia and personal items. It's obvious that Max has been living in the office. Max is lying on a large leather sofa when a soft knock at the door announces the arrival of a timid looking man, named Leo Bloom. Leo announces himself as an accountant from the firm of Whitehall and Marks. He's come to do Max's books. Leo is dressed professionally, but his clothes are a little worn, matching his demeanor.

Before Leo can get started, an old woman Max calls Hold Me-Touch Me arrives, and Max sends Leo to the bathroom to hide. Max goes to a cabinet where he keeps framed photographs of all the old women who are his benefactresses and retrieves the picture of Hold Me-Touch Me to put it on display.

Hold Me-Touch Me enters the room and implores Max to hold her and touch her. Hold Me-Touch Me is an eighty-year-old woman who brings checks to Max in exchange for sexual favors. Today, she's opted for one of their favorite role playing games, "The Virgin Milkmaid and the Well-Hung Stable Boy."

Leo re-enters the room and walks in on the love scene, standing aghast as what he is witnessing. Max is able to send Hold Me-Touch Me away with a promise of more adventure at their next encounter.

Max and Leo are alone now, and Max becomes immediately defensive of his behavior with Hold Me-Touch Me. However, Leo is interested only in getting to know Max, whom Leo considers the greatest Broadway producer of all time. Leo expresses a long held dream of becoming a producer himself, but Max discourages Leo and directs him to the accounting books.

Max looks out one of his office windows. Sighting a gorgeous blonde woman, he yells down to her that "when you got it, flaunt it." Max turns his attentions now to Leo, who finds discrepancies in the accounting. Max's hovering makes Leo so nervous that Leo pulls out a small piece of blue cloth, his comfort blanket.

Leo overreacts when Max touches the blue blanket and ends up in the fetal position on the floor. Max throws water on the hysterical Leo, and the two ultimately calm down. Leo explains a grave error in the accounts from *Funny Boy.*

According to the ledger, Max had raised one hundred thousand dollars, but the production cost only ninety eight thousand dollars. Max explains away the two thousand dollar discrepancy used on incidentals and tells Leo to do some creative bookkeeping, which Leo agrees to do.

As Max attempts to take a nap, Leo continues to work on the ledgers and muses out loud that, with the right elements, a show producer could make more money if his show were a flop. This is music to Max's ears, and he sits up abruptly on the sofa. Leo repeats his theory and uses the example of the *Funny Boy* production, where Max raised two thousand dollars more than he needed. Max could have raised a million dollars, produced his flop of a one hundred thousand dollar show, and kept the balance of the money. If the show were a hit, Max would have committed a crime by selling off one thousand percent. This would prohibit Max from paying off the investors.

Given Max's recent string of disappointing productions, he is confident that he can put this theory to the test and make a million each for both Leo and himself. All the two men have to do is tap into Max's network of little old lady backers, find an incredibly bad script, followed by an even worse director, and put on a musical destined to close on opening night.

Leo is concerned about the ethics of the proposition, but Max tries to convince him to shed his conventional repression and realize his dream of becoming a producer. Leo declines the offer and leaves Max kneeling in prayer on the floor of the office.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

Brooks presents a study in opposites through the characters of Max and Leo. Max is shown to be greedy, crass and willing to do anything to make money; including, enduring intimate encounters with elderly women in return for investments in his production. Leo, on the other hand, is a repressed accountant whose life runs as rigidly as the lines on ledger sheets. Leo makes the mistake of admitting to a dream of being a producer, a statement that Max uses to his own advantage in trying to convince Leo to participate in his scheme.

Max knows that he is an opportunist. Any authentic qualities which he may have once had have been pushed down in order to survive in his world. Leo represents everything that Max will never be, and Max is the flamboyant creative that Leo will never be. Their imminent partnership will be an interesting character study.

Just as Max is flamboyantly dramatic in his dress and style, Leo is repressed with immature tendencies exhibited by his blue blanket and the fetal position into which he coils when unsure of how to interact with the aggressive Max.

Brooks uses the literary technique of foreshadowing with Max's comments to a beautiful woman down on the street, which will become important near the end of the first act.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Leo returns to the offices of Whitehall and Marks where and his boss, Mr. Marks, chastises him for being six minutes late. Marks also takes the opportunity to remind Leo that he will never amount to anything and will never rise to any higher level in the company. The other accountants watch in horror, as if seeing their own fates played out in front of them.

When Marks leaves the room, Leo and the accountants sing about how unhappy they are in their jobs. This dismal mood sends Leo into a fantasy sequence. He imagines his life as a Broadway producer, where he is surrounded by beautiful women and his name glows in lights on marquees. Chorus girls appear out of cupboards in the office and dance and sing with Leo.

Suddenly, the music stops, and Marks re-enters the room. He demands to know what is going on, and Leo turns in his accountant's visor and pencils and quits his job. The chorus girls dance back on stage and surround Leo as his name shines brightly in lights at the back of the stage.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

This scene is important in enhancing the theme of dreams and taking the initiative to make them come true. Leo's initial fears of Max and the instability of a life in the theater are dismissed when Leo analyzes his despair of working for the rest of his life in a profession that restricts his ambitions. Leo rises above his fears and is determined to take a chance on living fully, which takes much courage, especially for someone of limited prowess.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

Leo returns to Max's office and finds Max in the same kneeling position he was in when Leo left earlier. Leo informs Max of his decision to join Max in producing a musical, because the possibility of going to jail could not compare to the life sentence Leo has been serving in his employment as an accountant. Leo has spent his life counting money for people who are no smarter than he is. Leo thinks that it is his turn for some good fortune.

Max and Leo launch into a song sealing their new partnership and vision. As the song ends, a huge lighted water display appears for dramatic effect. The lights dim to black, and the sound of a clock ticking is heard offstage to signify the passage of time.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

Leo seals his fate by taking the brave step toward changing his future. Ironically, Max has the ability to make Leo's dreams come true. Max will provide the venue for the musical, as well as the mixed blessing of producing a show that will fail and provide the two men riches beyond their wildest dreams.

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

It is now nearly dawn of the next day, and Max and Leo are still reading scripts in Max's office. Leo is fatigued, but Max urges his new partner on until they find a script which is bound to fail. The men return to their reading. Soon, Max rises to share the perfect script, destined to be a catastrophe and guaranteed to close in one night.

Max hands the script to Leo, who reads the title, *Springtime for Hitler, A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva at Berchtesgaden.* Leo is appalled that Max could consider such an atrocity. The musical's author is a man named, Franz Liebkind, who lives in New York City's Greenwich Village. Max quickly sums up the address and knows that Franz is used to off Broadway experimental theater and no parking places.

Max declares that he and Leo must obtain the rights to *Springtime for Hitler*, even if Franz demands to be paid. Max rises to leave and puts on his producer's Homburg-style hat. Leo asks if he may wear the other Homburg hanging on a nearby hook, but Max denies the request until Leo has become a full-fledged producer. The new partners leave the office.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

This scene shows the best and worst of Max who is the one who encourages Leo when his spirits begin to sag after reading bad scripts all night long. Max has incredible determination born from years of defeat and resilience. Brooks also shows the lengths to which Max will go to make money as he puts aside his Jewish heritage in order to consider a play about Hitler. Perhaps there is another perspective though and Brooks wants the reader to see Max not so much as someone who sells out but someone who knows how to survive and there is a certain nobility in that characteristic too.

Act 1, Scene 6

Act 1, Scene 6 Summary

A few hours later, Max and Leo arrive at the Greenwich Village apartment of Franz Liebkind, who is on the rooftop of the building preparing to feed some homing pigeons kept in cages. Franz is a German immigrant and dressed in authentic German clothing; including, lederhosen and an army helmet.

Franz sings to his pigeons about his homesickness for Germany, and the pigeons join in cooing the melody. Franz does not notice that Max and Leo have entered his rooftop area and continues feeding the birds. Leo sarcastically remarks that this man must be Franz, due to his dress. Max warns Leo not to notice anything, to just look ahead at all times.

Max approaches Franz, who immediately says that he has never been a member of the Nazi party and did not even know there was a war going on. Max reassures Franz that they are not from the government and have come to talk to Franz about his *Springtime for Hitler* script. Franz is overjoyed at the news and interrupts the conversation to tell the pigeons that the Fuhrer's name will soon be cleared with the production of the play.

Franz tries to convince Max and Leo that the public did not know the true Hitler, who could dance and paint due to all the negative news coverage about the man. Max contends that their intention is to portray the true Hitler, the man that Franz knew and loved. Franz refuses to sign Max's contract until both Max and Leo sing and dance with him to Hitler's favorite song, "Der Guten Tag Hop Clop."

Leo hesitates, but Max urges him on as Franz is close to signing. So, Leo and Max roll up their pants legs and join Franz in dancing and singing while the Bavarian music plays. There are a number of physical, slapstick moments throughout the dance, and Max must remind Leo not to lose his temper at the slaps and kicks from Franz. Satisfied that Leo and Max have good intentions toward his play, Franz makes one more request. He asks that Leo and Max take the Siegfried Oath, pledging eternal allegiance to the Fuhrer.

Franz provides Max and Leo with complimentary swastika armbands, and Leo starts to panic. However, Max tells him that he will let him know when they are getting in too deep. Once more, Leo balks, but Max's business savvy overrides him. The two producers take the oath replacing their upheld pointer fingers with their middle fingers in an obscene gesture when Franz is not looking.

The three men swear their allegiance to Adolf Elizabeth Hitler, and Franz finally signs the contract. Max and Leo leave hurriedly, and Franz waves goodbye as the pigeons raise their swastika armband covered wings in a Nazi salute.

Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis

Considering the time period for the play in 1959, it is plausible that there are still active Hitler supporters hiding out throughout the world. Somehow, Franz has managed to escape to New York City but wants to pay tribute to Hitler through his play and even boldly dresses in German clothing. Franz' song of homesickness is too funny to be sad, with Brooks' parody of the typical German military zealot.

There is some irony in the use of homing pigeons for Franz' companions, as he will never be able to return to Germany due to the Nazi atrocities during World War II. The pigeons, however, keep the dream of returning home alive for the wacky Franz, as he maintains his heritage in America.

Brooks' sarcastic and irreverent sense of humor is becoming more obvious, too, as evidenced by his giving Hitler the middle name of Elizabeth, providing swastika armbands for the pigeons as they manage their Nazi salutes, and having Max and Leo use their middle fingers to obscenely pledge their allegiance to Hitler.

Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 7 Summary

The next stop for Max and Leo is the apartment of Roger DeBris, a notoriously bad director known for disastrous stage productions and an openly homosexual lifestyle. Max and Leo ring the doorbell, which rings the notes to the song "I Feel Pretty" and are greeted by Roger's assistant, Carmen Ghia, who introduces himself as Roger's common law assistant.

Roger makes a grand entrance into the room, dressed in a long ball gown. He greets Max and Leo and states that he loved Max's production of *Funny Boy.* Roger explains the ball gown as a costume for this evening's Choreographer's Ball and dons a tiara explaining that he is supposed to be the Grand Duchess Anastasia, but looks more like the Chrysler Building.

Max asks if Roger has had a chance to read the script for *Springtime for Hitler*, and Roger thinks it is a fabulous piece of work. However, he cannot direct it due to its depressing topic of war. He believes that Broadway shows should be pretty and witty. Roger struggles to add one more adjective. When Leo offers up the word "gay," Roger leaps on it and suggests that he ask his production team what they think.

Roger calls out for his team to come meet Max and Leo. A parade of homosexual men dressed in assorted costumes; such as, an Indian chief, policeman and a sailor dance and sing with a group of others. Their song is entitled "Keep It Gay." Max and Leo join the impromptu performance, and eventually, Roger gets caught up in the energy and agrees to direct the musical after Max teases Roger with the idea of winning a Tony award.

Act 1, Scene 7 Analysis

The theme of homosexuality pervades this scene from the moment Max and Leo meet the openly homosexual Carmen Ghia, Roger's assistant. Roger greets the producers in full drag costume, complete with makeup under the auspices of going to a ball that evening. Roger's production team is comprised of gay men dressed in iconic heterosexual male costumes, and includes one lesbian woman decked out in a flannel shirt and work pants.

The song performed by the cast, "Keep It Gay," is a double entendre on the word meaning both happy and something of homosexual content. Brooks is a master of wordplay, and this scene is filled with word twists; including, the names of Carmen Ghia and Roger DeBris. The Karmann-Ghia was a sporty car introduced by Volkswagen in the late 1950's. It was known more for its design qualities than its power or endurance, much like Carmen Ghia's character. Roger DeBris' name is even more obvious. Debris

refers to something discarded or no longer useful. Unfortunately, this describes the oblivious Roger perfectly.

Act 1, Scene 8

Act 1, Scene 8 Summary

Later the same day, Max and Leo return to Max's office with signed contracts from the author of the world's worst play and the world's worst director. Their success is almost guaranteed. A knock at the door announces the arrival of a beautiful Swedish woman, who has come to audition for the musical. Leo begins to tell her that she is premature, but Max, taken by her strong sexuality, invites the woman inside.

The woman speaks in a strong Swedish accent and tells the producers that her first name is Ulla Inga Hansen Bensen Yonsen Tallen-Hallen Svaden-Svanson. Max offers to call her Ulla. Ulla tells Max and Leo that she has written a song inspired by a man yelling from an office window yesterday when she was getting out of her Rolls Royce limousine. Ulla removes her coat revealing a tight dress and begins to dance and sing "When You Got It, Flaunt It."

When Ulla finishes her number, Max offers her a part in the musical, even though casting has not yet begun. Max offers Ulla a job as a secretary/receptionist in his office until the musical auditions begin. Ulla gladly accepts the position, agrees to come back tomorrow and leaves the office.

Leo is love struck for the first time in his life. Max begins to explain the facts of life but stops when he sees Leo's blank stare. Instead, Max shows Leo the empty safe and the need to fill it with two million dollars for their plan to be successful. Max is appalled when Leo wants to know how much each of them should contribute. Max stresses to Leo that a producer never invests his own money into a production.

Max has a plan to come up with the money and tells Leo about the old ladies who give him money for his plays in exchange for sexual attention. Max tells Leo that he will not be around the office very much as he will soon be departing for Little Old Lady Land. Leo leaves the office, as Max primps and sings about his prowess with the pathetic old women and their available money.

Act 1, Scene 8 Analysis

Max cannot believe his good fortune in having the voluptuous Ulla in the office. He feels that perhaps she is an omen for better things to come and a return to the days when he was surrounded by beautiful women all the time. Leo, however, is struck by Ulla's beauty. He falls in love, but does not know how to explain it. Max falls back into his manipulative characteristics and prepares to charm the old women with no regard to their personal feelings or emotions. This is another contrast in the characters of Max and Leo.

Brooks uses Ulla as the principal stereotype in this musical filled with iconic characters. Ulla appears to be a typical, dumb Swedish blonde with an unintelligible accent. However, she'll ironically prove to be much savvier than the producers give her credit for.

Act 1, Scene 9

Act 1, Scene 9 Summary

The stage is set with a backdrop of huge Valentine cut-out hearts with the words "Little Old Lady Land" announcing the park-like location of this scene. Three little old ladies named Lick Me-Bite Me, Hold Me-Touch Me and Kiss Me-Feel Me stop their knitting and break into a song about their unhappy lives of useless pursuits, when all they really want is sex.

A spotlight hits Max, who solicits a check from Hold Me-Touch Me, who will not relinquish the money without a game of "The Hairless Chihuahua and the Well-Hung Great Dane." Max and Hold Me-Touch Me leave the park, but Max is soon seen pushing Lick Me-Bite Me on a swing until she hands over a check.

A whole chorus line of little old ladies with walkers begins to dance and sing about Max's prowess, and Max moves glibly among the women collecting checks. The lights fade on the little old ladies, who freeze in place. The spotlight is on Max, who shouts for Leo. Leo enters and learns that Max has secured the necessary funds to produce *Springtime for Hitler.*

Max and Leo are joined onstage by Roger, Carmen, Roger's production team, Ulla and Franz, who all sing the praises of Max and Leo and the almost guaranteed success of the musical. Before long, a piece of scenery drops down with the front of the Schubert Theater now touting the words "Bialystock and Bloom Present *Springtime for Hitler*, a New Neo-Nazi Musical Opening Soon!"

Act 1, Scene 9 Analysis

Brooks uses the literary technique of satire in this scene when showing Max's indiscriminate dalliances with the Little Old Ladies. A satire typically points out flaws in character using humor and sarcasm. Max is using the women for the money they can provide and has no real interest in them personally, although he pretends to by using terms of endearment and showing false affection.

Brooks blatantly names the Little Old Ladies with overtly sensual names as Max's way of remembering their particular likes. This is another way of dehumanizing the women and showing Max's true intentions.

Ironically, Max is heroic to all the other characters, because he is capable of raising the funding so that the others will have employment and a showcase for their respective talents. Leo is the only one who knows that the production is entered into with less than noble intentions.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

This scene begins with Max and Leo returning to the office, which Ulla has transformed by cleaning and painting. Everything in the office is now a pristine white, including, all the furniture and draperies. Ulla is on a ladder making some finishing touches with a paintbrush.

Max and Leo think they have entered the wrong office and begin to leave, when Ulla calls them back. Max must make a payment to the Schubert Theatre, so he opens the safe and begins cramming stacks of money into his pockets. He leaves Leo and Ulla alone in the office.

Ulla flirts openly with Leo, whose shyness makes him appear awkward, especially when he reaches for his blue blanket again. For all his shyness, though, Leo cannot help staring at Ulla. She returns to her painting task and Leo begins to sing "That Face" proclaiming the dangers of love, which he is prepared to encounter because of Ulla's beautiful face. Leo helps Ulla down off the ladder, the pair dances for a little while and finally kisses. Leo immediately throws his blue blanket in the trash can.

Max returns with the good news that everything is secured at the Schubert Theatre and good naturedly calls out to Leo to begin preparing the two sets of books for the production. Max is also enthralled by the sight of Ulla, who has returned once more to her ladder. Ulla has to remind both Max and Leo that they are late for auditions which begin today for *Springtime for Hitler.* The scene ends as Max, Leo and Ulla leave the office.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Brooks uses some visual imagery in the stage design to show the new vision of the producers. Ulla has painted the office white and changed all the furnishings to white, as well, to symbolize the fresh start for the characters in this new venture.

The difference in Max and Leo surfaces once more, as Leo is romantically enraptured by Ulla's charms, while Max is the perfect caricature of a lecherous cad.

There is emotional metamorphosis, too, with Leo and Ulla realizing their love for each other. Leo pushes past his fear of love and powerful emotions and symbolizes his newfound bravery by throwing away his blue blanket.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

The action now moves to the bare stage at the theatre where Max, Leo and Ulla are joined by Roger and Franz. The stage fills with various types of people dancing in Hitler costumes under the direction of Carmen Ghia. Vocal auditions begin, and Roger quickly dismisses a succession of singers in Hitler costume. Franz takes offense at some of the men who are overtly homosexual, claiming that the Fuhrer was a strong man and not a mousy, mama's boy.

Franz sings a signature piece in a very strong German accent, and Max realizes that Franz is the perfect person to play Hitler in the musical.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

This scene speaks to some historical and cultural aspects of the time period of the late 1950's, and the proposition that Adolf Hitler may have been a homosexual. Franz' strong objections to the homosexual men auditioning for the Fuhrer's role draw more attention to the supposition than if he had let the issue pass. This is another way that the author uses satire to display characteristics that can be perceived as negative. It is important to note that homosexuality should not be viewed in a negative context, but during the time period of the play, it most often times was.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

Finally, it is Opening Night for *Springtime for Hitler*, and two usherettes enter the stage singing about Max's latest show and whether or not it will be a hit. A workman puts up a sign touting "Opening Night," but also shows the sign's other side that states "Closing Night."

Max and Leo arrive at the theatre in their evening wear, and Leo begins to don a producer's hat, but Max cautions him that he has not yet earned the right. Ulla rushes in running late for her makeup and costume. She stops to adjust Leo's tie in a moment of tenderness.

A German sidecar pulls up to the theatre, and Franz steps out instructing his driver to return after the last curtain call. Franz has to put on his Hitler mustache, and he is ready to go onstage. All the theatregoers are ushered inside, just as Roger and Carmen arrive. Leo makes the mistake of wishing everyone good luck, as he is not aware of the theatrical superstition that that greeting will most certainly insure the opposite.

Roger, Carmen and Franz launch into the song, "You Never Say Good Luck on Opening Night" and tell Leo that the appropriate statement is "Break a Leg." Franz runs off to take his place backstage. No sooner do the producers yell "Break a Leg" than a crash is heard indicating that this is exactly what has happened to Franz.

As there is no understudy for Franz, the producers are in a quandary about who can take his place on such short notice. It occurs to them that Roger is the only one who knows the part perfectly. Roger hesitates at first, but finally agrees to go onstage as the Fuhrer.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

Capitalizing on the last scene with Franz' stringent objections about a gay man playing Hitler, the author perpetuates the scenario by creating the situation where Franz is debilitated, and the character of Hitler must now be portrayed by the openly homosexual, Roger DeBris. Brooks mixes this irreverence with some typical theatre superstitions woven in to make for a delightful scene that changes the scope of the upcoming production.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

The musical begins with a chorus of Bavarian costumed maidens and young men singing about the troubles facing Germany, which has found a new leader in the person of Adolf Hitler. This man was to become Germany's new hope providing a season of springtime in the country's life. A male singer, dressed as a German storm trooper, enters the stage and launches into the musical's signature song, "Springtime for Hitler."

As the song unfolds, chorus girls parade around and dance, while wearing iconic symbols of Germany on their costumes; such as, sausages, beer and pretzels. Ulla is the main chorus girl and announces the arrival of the Fuhrer, played now by Roger, who appears at the top of the stage and enters into a song and dance with both male and female storm troopers.

The production is elaborate, gaudy and includes the characters of Stalin, Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who are summarily dismissed by the dancing Hitler. Ultimately, Roger is joined onstage by even more goose-stepping storm troopers whose dance steps lead them into forming the shape of a giant swastika.

Soon, uniformed paratroopers begin to fall from the ceiling, and tiny papier-mache tanks are driven onstage. Hitler takes his place on a globe, and Ulla dances in, wearing a silver lame Nazi uniform.

The curtain falls on this outlandish production, and the cast takes curtain calls. Roger is careful to hug Ulla, but not Carmen, so that he can perpetuate the fazade of not being a homosexual man in the role of Hitler.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

The climax of this musical is the opening night of *Springtime for Hitler.* All the stereotypes of the Nazi regime are presented in gaudy, over-the-top style in typical parody-style. This literary technique ridicules a person or institution by making them appear ridiculous, thus diminishing their perception. This over-acted and over-produced musical mocks both the institution of Nazism and Hitler's rule by exploiting all the icons with garish production values.

Act 2, Scene 5

Act 2, Scene 5 Summary

It is now midnight, and Max and Leo arrive at their office where a huge "Congratulations" banner is hanging. Both men are stunned at the newspaper critics' reviews declaring *Springtime for Hitler* a major success and begin to sing a song entitled, "Where Did We Go Right," questioning how the show could be such a success when they did everything they knew to make it fail.

Suddenly, Leo opens the safe, grabs the two accounting ledgers. He tries to leave, stating that he intends to turn himself in to the authorities with the hopes that this will earn him a lighter sentence. Max pounces on Leo, preventing him from leaving and convinces him that he is just overreacting. The two men wrestle on the couch to take possession of the books, as Roger and Carmen enter the office.

Max berates Roger for making the musical a success and suddenly Franz appears, his leg in a cast and a gun in his hand. He's prepared to shoot Max and Leo for violating the Siegfried Oath. Everyone in the office dives for cover, and Roger tries to reason with Franz that his musical is a success, but Franz is infuriated, because the production has made a fool of Hitler. Franz begins shooting wildly, and Max and Leo begin to cry, which infuriates Franz who intends to show the two men how to die like men. Pointing the gun at his own head, Franz fires, but the gun simply clicks. Franz collapses in frustration on the sofa, and Max suggests that Franz shoot the actors instead of the producers, because it was the actors who actually made the audience laugh.

The dialogue is interrupted by the arrival of the police, who have come in response to the gunfire. Franz tries to escape, and noises offstage indicate that he has fallen and broken his other leg. Before leaving, one of the sergeants picks up the two accounting ledgers and takes the books and Max down to police headquarters.

Ulla arrives at the office shortly after and finds Leo still hiding in the coat rack. She tells him that he can either go to jail with Max or take the two million dollars and go with her to Rio. Leo and Ulla dance to a samba, which gives an indication as to which choice Leo will make.

Act 2, Scene 5 Analysis

There are two major ironies in this scene. First, the musical is declared a success despite all effort to insure its failure. Second, Leo departs from his typically conscientious behavior to take the money and run away to Rio. Initially, Leo wants to do the right thing and turn himself in, but in the end, he hides while Max is taken away.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

It is now a few weeks later, and Max is sitting alone in a jail cell lamenting the absence of Leo and any chance for getting released on bail. A guard delivers a postcard from Leo, which declares that Rio is a great place and that he and Ulla are enjoying themselves tremendously.

Max's rage turns into a song entitled "Betrayed," where he acknowledges Leo's actions and realizes that Leo has let him down at this critical time in spite of Max's including Leo in on the potential to become a producer.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

Max is a pitiable character left alone in a jail cell. Logic says that he is getting what he deserves and is lucky to have escaped for so long, given his inappropriate behavior in his interactions with other people. Conversely, Leo represented Max's chance to redeem himself by helping someone else realize a dream. His feelings of betrayal are poignant and justified.

Act 2, Scene 7

Act 2, Scene 7 Summary

A little later that evening, Max appears in a New York City courtroom where he is declared incredibly guilty. In his own defense, Max affirms that he was simply a Broadway producer with no conscience or anyone who cared for him. The thing that is worse than being found guilty is the betrayal of a man he had considered his friend.

At this point, Leo and Ulla arrive dressed in tropical, bright clothes. Leo admits to deserting Max when he owns half of the responsibility in the fraudulent accounting. It is revealed that Ulla and Leo got married in Rio.

Leo steps up to Max's defense and declares that Max has not harmed the Little Old Ladies, a fact which the ladies confirm. Neither has Max harmed Leo; in fact, Max is the only person in Leo's life to provide any magic or the ability to dream. Both men sing a song about their empty lives until the appearance of the other, and the judge sentences them both to five years in the Sing Sing penitentiary.

The scene ends with Ulla and the Little Old Ladies screaming in protest at the sentence.

Act 2, Scene 7 Analysis

Brooks explores the theme of loyalty and the ultimate redemption found between two friends who have a deep respect for the other. Authentic feelings and loyalty are new to Max, which makes the betrayal especially difficult. Fortunately, Leo rises to the occasion and mends the bond before permanent damage is done.

Act 2, Scene 8

Act 2, Scene 8 Summary

As Max and Leo join the other convicts in prison, we see that Max is directing a new prison musical called *Prisoners of Love*, where hearts that are in love always remain free. A guard enters to announce that Max, Leo and Franz have been pardoned by the governor for bringing joy and laughter to the prisoners at Sing Sing.

Suddenly, Ulla leads a bevy of chorus girls on stage, and they sing and dance to the *Prisoners of Love* theme. As the girls perform, the background jail set rises and is replaced by the marquee of the Schubert Theatre touting "Bialystock and Bloom Present Their New Smash Hit Musical *Prisoners of Love!*" Eventually, Roger and Carmen join the group, and everyone enters the theatre as the scene ends.

Act 2, Scene 8 Analysis

Brooks is the master of the play on words. He has fun with the dialogue, as the prisoners "sing" in "Sing Sing" and perform a direct homage to Gene Kelly and the style of song and dance made popular in the mid twentieth century. There are also references to other literary pieces and cultural icons throughout the musical which, in spite of some of the slapstick humor, is a play intended for an educated audience.

Act 2, Scene 9

Act 2, Scene 9 Summary

In this last scene, Max and Leo enter from opposite sides of the stage. Each man is dressed, once more, in their tuxedo, but with no hats. Max carries two hats and hands one to Leo. Now, both men don their producer's hats, shake hands and sing about their friendship and commitment to produce plays in a long-term partnership.

As the scene draws to a close, Max and Leo turn and walk together into a huge sunset backdrop.

Act 2, Scene 9 Analysis

The play ends with the ultimate message of the value of loyalty and friendship as the true rewards in life. Brooks wants readers to understand that it is important to accept each friend for both positive and negative characteristics. Max and Leo have a second chance at friendship, as well as, a business partnership and have reconnected to forge an even stronger bond with their new awareness of each other.

Characters

Max Bialystock

Max Bialystock is one of the two producers referred to in the play's title. As one song points out, Bialystock was once the "King of Broadway." When the story opens, however, he is washed-up, having produced a string of flops so terrible that they regularly do not make it past the first performance. The theater showing his current work, *Funny Boy*!, even had a special sign made up for Bialystock's works, with "Opening Night" on one side and "Closing Night" on the other, to save time. The only way that Bialystock has been able to put shows on at all is by romancing lonesome old ladies, who invest in his shows in exchange for his companionship. He keeps a cabinet of photos of these ladies, bringing out one at a time, making each woman believe she is special to him.

Bialystock is defined by his crass immorality. When Leo Bloom points out that he can make more money with a flop than with a hit, he does not think twice before setting his scheme into motion. He is so greedy that he is willing to ignore his Jewish background and swear an oath to honor Adolf Hitler in order to secure the rights to Franz Liebkind's play, which he knows will be the worst production ever to hit Broadway.

Late in the second act, Bialystock has a song, "Betrayed," that humanizes him, showing that his loss is more than money and the jail time that he faces□that in fact, he has bonded with Bloom as a friend and mentor, and feels let down. When Bloom returns to testify for him in court, however, Bialystock tells the judge that his friendship with Bloom is the first true friendship he has ever had. Bloom is the first person that he has ever trusted. By the end, Bialystock is the same spirited rake that he was at the beginning; he throws his efforts into producing the show *Prisoners of Love*, another terrible-sounding musical that is destined for Broadway success.

Leopold Bloom

One of the show's two central characters, Leopold Bloom is the more complex of the two. He is a meek accountant, so frightened by Max Bialystock's natural vivacity when they first meet that he is reduced to cowering on the floor, fondling the small blue blanket that he has retained from childhood. Bloom's fear is offset, though, by his deeply-held desire to be a Broadway producer. After being exposed to the show business life during his visit to Bialystock's office, Bloom returns to his office at Whitehall and Marks and notices how acutely unhappy he is as an accountant. He then decides to join Bialystock in his illegal scheme.

Bloom's fascination with show business is reinforced when he meets Ulla, the gorgeous blonde bombshell who comes to work for Bialystock and Bloom as a secretary before taking her place in the show *Springtime for Hitler*. Bloom is smitten with Ulla, so much

so that when he and she have a duet at the beginning of act 2, he throws his security blanket into the garbage. His interest in her is sweet and romantic, as he sings about her beautiful face. This is contrasted with Max Bialystock's reaction to her, which is clearly steeped in lust.

When the plot to defraud the investors is found out, Bloom proves to have become the man that Bialystock urged him to be, running away to Rio de Janeiro with the beautiful girl and the ill-gotten loot. Bloom has a conscience, though, and returns before Bialystock is sentenced. In the song in the courtroom, Bloom acknowledges the changes that Bialystock has made in his life, taking him from a glum and borderline-tragic life to one filled with joy. The case for their close friendship is made so convincingly that the judge sends them to jail together.

The name Leopold Bloom is taken from James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, a fact that is referred to in act 1, scene 4, when Bloom asks, "When's it gonna be Bloom's day?"□in Joyce's novel, "Bloom's day" is June 16th, the date that the program gives for the events in *The Producers*.

Roger De Bris

De Bris is a pretentious, flamboyantly gay director. His apartment is filled with eccentric show-business people, each a different homosexual stereotype. When Bialystock and Bloom first approach De Bris (pronounced like "debris"), he is wearing a flowing evening gown, which he explains is his costume for the Choreographer's Ball. He is hesitant to direct *Springtime for Hitler* because he finds the subject matter too serious: as De Bris explains in a song filled with double entendres, he feels that the key to a successful Broadway hit is to "Keep It Gay." This point is made again when his usual associates, such as his set designer, choreographer, and lighting director, come out, each a more outrageously gay caricature than the last.

The producers count on De Bris's natural bad taste to ensure that their musical will be a failure: as Bilaystock explains to Bloom as they are hiring him to direct, "This guy couldn't direct you to the bathroom."

When Franz Liebkind breaks his leg and cannot perform in the show, De Bris steps in to play Hitler. The result is a truly effeminate Hitler, who seems enraptured with the public's attention.

Carmen Ghia

Carmen Ghia is Roger De Bris's "common-law assistant" and is as openly gay as De Bris is. In the play, Carmen Ghia functions to explain De Bris's more antic notions and to give the director another gay character to argue with cattily. It is Ghia who knows De Bris well enough to suggest that he would know all of the words to the starring role in *Springtime for Hitler* and would have a secret desire to step into the part when Liebkind is incapacitated.

Gunter

Gunter is a Nazi assistant to Franz Liebkind, who drops Franz off in front of the theater on the night of the *Springtime for Hitler* opening.

Hold Me-Touch Me

Hold Me-Touch Me is the most obvious of the little old ladies that Bialystock romances in order to secure backing for his show. While Hold Me-Touch Me's scene with Bialystock is longer, her personality is not distinguishable from the other ladies, such as Lick Me-Bite Me, Kiss Me-Feel Me, or Clinch Me-Pinch Me.

Franz Liebkind

Liebkind is a Nazi who lives in New York City, in Greenwich Village. He has written a play to lionize his hero, Adolf Hitler. Bialystock and Bloom determine, after reading dozens of plays, that Liebkind's must be the worst play ever; it is certain to fail.

As if the subject of his play were not enough to prove Liebkind's mental instability, the play has great fun with his delusions. For one thing, he dresses in lederhosen and wears a Nazi helmet. In addition, Liebkind is so enthusiastic about having his version of Hitler's life seen by the public that he does not recognize the contempt that Bialystock and Bloom, who have obviously Jewish names, have for him and for Hitler. Liebkind makes them put on swastika armbands and swear their devotion to Hitler. Liebkind claims to know little-recognized, highly unlikely facts about Hitler, such as the fact that he could paint an entire apartment in an afternoon□two coats!□and that he was a good dancer, and that his middle name was "Elizabeth." Before he is approached by the producers, Liebkind is on the roof of his apartment house, singing about how much he misses Bavaria. He is alone but is backed up by a chorus of singing pigeons, indicating the extent of his separation from reality.

After an extensive audition process, Bialystock realizes that Liebkind is the perfect choice to play the starring role in *Springtime for Hitler*, ensuring that the play will be a flop. On opening night, though, after the cast has explained to Bloom that Broadway superstition requires saying "break a leg" instead of "good luck," Liebkind actually does slip and break his leg, and has to be replace in the show.

After the play, Liebkind goes to Bialystock and threatens to kill the producers. His gun goes off, summoning the police, and they all end up in jail together.

Mister Marks

Leo Bloom's boss at the accounting office where he works, Mr. Marks is described as "a short-tempered, cigar-chomping little tyrant." His petty badgering makes Bloom decide to quit the accounting business and try his hand at being a producer.

Ulla Inga Hansen Bensen Yonsen Tallen-Hallen Svaden-Svanson

One of the more obvious jokes in the script is that, after introducing herself with a nine-word-long string of names, Ulla announces that is just her first name. Bialystock declares that they do not have time to hear her last name, too.

Ulla is a voluptuous blonde who shows up at Bialystock and Bloom's office to audition for a part in their new play. She is cast as Eva Braun, Hitler's lover. But they also give her a position as their secretary in order to keep her around.

Much is made of Ulla's Swedish accent and her poor ability to understand or speak English. With no skill whatsoever as a secretary, her office work is limited to picking up the telephone and saying "Bialystock and Bloom" repeatedly, like a parrot.

Ulla is aware of her own sensuality; her audition for the producers is a song called "When You Got It, Flaunt It." Later, when she is singing the duet "That Face" with Leo Bloom, it becomes clear that she is sincerely attracted to him. In the end, after Bloom has been to prison, Ulla is with him, starring in the new musical that Bilaystock and Bloom have developed.

Themes

Greed

At the core of Bialystock and Bloom's scheme to defraud the backers of their production is greed. Max Bialystock is so greedy that he ends act 1, scene 2, on his knees, praying to God, "Oh, Lord, I want that money!!" When scene 4 begins, presumably some time later, he is still on his knees, still praying. Leo Bloom is not initially as motivated by greed as he is inhibited by fear, but, after returning to the pool of unhappy, browbeaten accountants at Whitehall and Marks, he becomes convinced that, deep down, he really does want to have the things that money can buy.

To Bialystock, wealth represents the kind of lifestyle that he once knew, which he sings about in "The King of Broadway": champagne, fine clothes, huge hotel suites, and the adoration of beautiful chorus girls. His greed is pushed further with the arrival of Ulla, whose beauty represents the worldly things that are unattainable for a man like him, who does not have money. Bloom's greed is a copy of Bialystock's until, at the beginning of act 2, he permits himself to open up to Ulla's charms. When Bloom takes the two million dollars and runs away to Rio with Ulla, his action is almost as much an act of fear as of greed; Bialystock would have found it a dream fulfilled to be rich in a tropical paradise with a beautiful girl, but Bloom leaves the country to run away from the police.

Maturation

There is nothing subtle about the way that the play uses Bloom's little blue blanket as a symbol for his barely-repressed infantilism. When he first meets Bialystock, he is driven to hysterics, afraid of Max's natural overwhelming vitality. The only thing that can calm his panic is stroking his face with his blanket, like a young child would do. This returns him to the security and comfort of childhood. Bialystock openly mocks Bloom and shows his disgust, but Bloom holds fast to the behavior that has comforted him all his life.

Bloom takes a small step toward maturity when he stands up to his boss, Mr. Marks. Having been exposed to the excitement of Broadway producing and fraud, Bloom realizes that the boring routine that he once thought of as comforting is, in reality, soul-deadening.

It is love, however, that makes Bloom give up his security blanket. He realizes that his "minor compulsion," as he puts it, might hurt his chances with Ulla. Still, he does not actually throw the blanket in the garbage until he has danced with her, when he is certain that he and Ulla are in love with each other. Maturity, for Bloom, means accepting the fearful uncertainty of love, leaving the world of familiar things for a world of greater promise.

Community

The Producers shows two lonely, distrustful individuals opening up to become part of the social world that surrounds them. Both Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom admit this growth in their song "Til Him," in which they each identify themselves as having lived unfulfilled lives when they tried to face the world all alone. Up to the time of that realization, Bialystock, who made a practice of taking advantage of his investors, feared that anyone he met was trying to take advantage of him. Bloom had been too timid to face up to society's disapproval until he saw how Bialystock lived without approval. Each man's negative qualities cancel out the other's over the course of the play, so that, united, they find comfort. This opening up to each other is symbolized in the way that, having been called "Bialystock and Bloom" repeatedly through the play, they refer to themselves in their final song as "Leo and Max."

This play's sense of building a community goes beyond the friendship between the two main characters, though. The coterie of odd people that they pick up in the process of trying to achieve the worst play ever becomes like a family to them. In the end, the people whom they chose because they were unlikable become indispensable to Bialystock and Bloom. Even though he is a deranged, talentless Nazi who has tried to kill them, Franz Liebkind is, almost as a matter of course, given a part in their *Prisoners of Love* show while they are incarcerated□just as Ulla, Roger De Bris, and the rest are naturally included in their success when they are freed. Bialystock and Bloom find themselves, over the course of the play, forming a theatrical troupe of misfits who are part of the theater scene but do not belong any place else.

Style

Motivating Idea

To a great extent, the plot of a show like *The Producers* derives naturally from the central idea. Once Brooks decided to work with the conceit of a producer working to become rich by mounting a losing production, there are certain events that would naturally have to take place. The story would have to establish the protagonist's previous lack of success; it would have to introduce someone who gives Bialystock his main idea; then there would have to be a succession of interesting, eccentric characters intended to comprise a truly awful play, and investors to be swindled; followed by a play-within-the-play of truly terrible proportions; then the surprising success of the play; and the unintended consequences of the play's success.

Following this basic structure, Brooks adds plot devices that make the story even more appealing to mass audiences. The subplot of a love interest between Bloom and Ulla adds a humanizing effect, for instance. Also, Brooks follows the show's emotional high point, the "Springtime for Hitler" production number, with several points that make this story of greed and embezzlement end pleasantly. Having Bloom return from Rio at the end to save Bialystock affirms the lasting strength of friendship; having the producers go to prison affirms society's rules against swindling; and having them released against all probability and become successful producers gives audiences the satisfaction of seeing characters they have come to care about end up happy.

Stereotype

Usually, the use of stereotypes indicates that the author of a piece lacks imagination or is so opposed to a group of people that he or she has not bothered to think of individual characteristics for his characters. The stereotypes that Brooks includes in *The Producers* are so numerous and so obviously offensive that they have a different effect. Instead of reflecting poorly on the author, audiences, knowing that no writer could be *that* insensitive, are invited to reflect on the stereotypes instead. Brooks's many "gay" jokes surrounding Roger De Bris, Carmen Ghia, and their friends are not so much jokes about gays as they are jokes about gay jokes. The black accountant singing like a slave is not meant to imply that black people meet the slave stereotype, but to show that the situation is like that of the slave stereotype; and the sexist imagery of Ulla as an unintelligent sex object falls apart when she sings her song "When You've Got It, Flaunt It," showing that she is in fact in control of her fate, fully aware of the personality that others might find foolish. Brooks's stereotypes are acceptable because he does not use them in ignorance, but instead uses them to shock the sensibilities of audiences who are used to fewer stereotypes, which forces audiences to think for themselves.

Historical Context

Brooks has chosen to set *The Producers* in 1959. The 1950s are considered to be the heyday of the Broadway musical. They were integral to American pop culture, the source of the music that dominated the top-ten lists on the radio just as rock and roll made its debut. Shows from the 1950s that still run in frequent revivals into the 2000s include *Guys and Dolls*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *My Fair Lady*, *The King and I*, and *West Side Story*. Composers of these musicals included such legends of the stage as Cole Porter, Leonard Bernstein, and the team of Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Rogers and Hammerstein are credited with defining the modern Broadway musical with their 1943 show *Oklahoma*!: while there had been stage shows with musical numbers in them, *Oklahoma*! is considered the first show to integrate lyrics into the storyline instead of stopping the action every once in a while for a vaguely relevant song. As the culture became more media savvy, though, the traditional Broadway musical increasingly came to be seen as sentimental and trite.

By the end of the twentieth century, the Broadway musical was more about spectacle than about stories or tunes. Huge, multi-million dollar productions used an increasing amount of clever and expensive moving sets, light shows, and costuming. These dazzled audiences, but their relationship to traditional musicals seemed to go no further than presenting music and action together on the stage. Audiences came to see them because they each had some new achievement, but the performances of the actors onstage became less and less important. Investors poured millions into elaborate stagings of *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*. A notable development was the interest of huge entertainment corporations; this brought needed cash to Broadway, which had gone through some very lean years in the 1980s. The Disney company, with investments in everything from film to theme parks to radio, started to recycle its cartoons for the stage; the first was *Beauty and the Beast* in 1994 and, when that was a success, Disney bought the New Amsterdam Theatre to mount its twelve million dollar production of *The Lion King*, which proved to be a worthwhile investment. It seemed that the future of Broadway musicals was to be bigger, brighter, louder, and more expensive.

When *The Producers* hit Broadway, it represented a throwback to earlier days of song and dance. Brooks's score is clearly patterned on the tunes and themes of 1950s musicals, and the entire production can be done with just a few sets and no exotic or expensive special effects. It rewrote the rules by proving that a musical could be a breakout success without an overly elaborate production relying on characters, tunes and solid performances to hold audiences in their seats. The tide seems to have turned, with musicals, such as *Urinetown* and *Avenue Q* relying more on wit than spectacle to keep audiences entertained.

Critical Overview

When *The Producers* opened its trial run in Chicago, it was well-received, but was not the universally-loved, critic-proof behemoth it was to later become. *Chicago Sun-Times* theater critic Hedy Weiss was impressed by the show, but was well aware that it was a "buoyant boisterous musical-theater time machine," referring to Mel Brooks's "giddy, childlike, pseudo-naïve irreverence and intentional bad taste" and "the blatant silliness of his old-time jokes and attitudes." Weiss went on to say, "Unapologetically politically incorrect, he has concocted what 50 years ago would have been called 'the tired businessman's show,' with sexpot and all□a pure, simple, self-confidently anachronistic entertainment."

Two months later, the show opened in New York, taking the town by storm. In the *New York Times*, which has a long-standing tradition of setting the standards for Broadway (and, by extension, for the theater world), Ben Brantley's review from April 20, 2001, started, "How do you single out highlights in a bonfire? Everybody who sees *The Producers*□and that should be as close to everybody as the St. James Theater allows□is going to be hard-pressed to choose one favorite bit from the sublimely ridiculous spectacle that opened last night. . . . It is, to put it simply, the real thing: a big Broadway book musical that is so ecstatically drunk on its powers to entertain that it leaves you delirious, too."

To deal with the unprecedented popularity of the show, ticket prices were immediately hiked, from $90 to $100. Later, to foil scalpers who were monopolizing the best seats for months to come, the show's backers took the unprecedented move of raising top prices to an astronomical $480 apiece.

At the 2001 Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Awards, *The Producers* made history by receiving 12 statuettes, breaking the record of 10 awarded to *Hello Dolly* in 1964. Among the Tonys won were best lead actor (Nathan Lane); best featured actor (Gary Beach); best featured actress (Cady Huffman); best director and best choreography (Susan Stroman); and, unexpectedly, best musical score for Brooks, who, at 74 years old, had never written music for a Broadway show before.

One area of contention about this show has always been its offensive comic portrayals of blacks, women, gays, etc. Jim Seavor, writing for a largely gay audience in the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, acknowledged complaints that the play made fun of homosexuals, but his response was that it was funny; that there were other venues where audiences can see more well-rounded portrayals; and that, in the context of *The Producers*, gays are "simply part of a large group of over-the-top characters. Everyone is a target." He also pointed out that the characters that seem outrageous to audiences are taken as being fairly normal by other characters on the stage. He concluded, "In a way, it's a relief to sit there and laugh at what we've been told we should no longer laugh at."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of literature and creative writing. In this essay, Kelly examines the way Brooks's play uses mildly shocking stereotypes to make audiences reflect on the Broadway musical tradition.

Mel Brooks's theatrical adaptation of his 1968 film *The Producers* has been an unmitigated success from the moment it arrived on Broadway, garnering a record number of Antoinette Perry Award ("Tony") nominations and awards, and raising levels for ticket prices. There are obvious factors involved in its success, such as two big stars, solid musical performances, and terrific production values all around. What critics usually express surprise about, however, is that Brooks is able to make mass audiences warm up to the show's more offensive elements. At the heart of the story is a one-joke premise□a campy musical gala featuring Adolph Hitler. Brooks surrounds this with moth-eaten stereotypes□sex-maddened old ladies, brainless buxom blondes, swishy homosexuals, a slavish black character and Jews, belligerent and cowardly. The satire in *The Producers* runs the meager gamut from offensive to irrelevant. Brooks gives audiences much to dislike, and they have responded by lining up for tickets.

No one ever said that a musical comedy has to be thoughtful or tasteful. It might even be taken for granted that the most money is to be made in pandering to the audience's least common denominator□providing mindless entertainment that the greatest number of people can be comfortable with. The odd thing about *The Producers* is how it can be comforting to the audience by dealing in offensive images. In part, this might just say something about who the average theatergoer is: someone who does not find offense in unflattering portrayals of blacks, Irish, Jews, Swedes, the elderly, gays, or females. Surely none of these groups can be excluded from the droves of people racing to the play. What is missing from the play's images is the actual offensiveness. Though the play is clearly centered on offensive characters, they are presented in a way that even the mainstream patron of musical theater would be hard pressed to find objectionable. In using sensitive cultural images without offending anyone's sensibilities, the end product might have been bland; instead, Brooks has absorbed the energy from poor taste while throwing out its poisonous effects.

In his notes about how he came to bring *The Producers* to the stage, Brooks said that he wanted to do an old-fashioned musical comedy, the kind that he felt they had stopped making around 1960 (quoted in Brooks): "Unhappily, as far as I'm concerned, the musical comedy was replaced by what might be called the musical tragedy, the kind of show, often from London, in which you sit in the dark all evening without laughing once. And though you stopped smoking years ago, because you know that smoking causes cancer, you long throughout the show for a Lucky Strike." With his reference to the somber contemporary blockbusters of writers such as Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Brooks's invocation of a past that came before people knew about cancer and smoked Lucky Strikes with abandon, Brooks has identified the mandate for *The Producers* as light-hearted nostalgia. The whole production is steeped in the past: the Third Reich of the 1930s and 1940s, the musicals of the 1940s and 1950s, and the original film of the

1960s. According to the script, the play is set in 1959, though its sense of reality is so skewed that there is nothing particularly significant about that date (other than its relationship to Brooks's quote about musical tragedies).

Nostalgia is particularly useful for musical comedy because its very nature is to show the world in a sanitized, rosier light than one sees when looking at the present. Audiences accept broader characterizations in nostalgic comedies, as if people were simpler in the past than they are in the present. The stereotype of the blonde Swedish kitten, to give one example, would be much more offensive if she were being passed off as a part of contemporary reality, as if the woman's movement had made no progress from the 1960s to the present: since the play is set before the 1960s, both in date and in spirit, the character of Ulla can, when played by a strong performer with a good sense of self, be taken as an egotist, not a victim. Gags about Irish cops, Jewish accountants, and an African American office worker singing a Negro spiritual do not linger in the air announcing their staleness, as they did when they were more common, in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead they act as nostalgic reminders of the vaudeville tradition that Brooks, if not most of his audience, might remember.

The tone of lighthearted cornball stereotyping this production attains is centered on the two leads, Max Bialystock and Leopold Bloom. Both represent traditional Jewish stock characters. Bialystock, conniving and greedy, is a schnorrer, taking advantage of others, directly descended from Shakespeare's Shylock, seen onstage four centuries earlier. If Bialystock is threateningly aggressive, though, Bloom is at least as infuriating in his neurotic insecurity. Bialystock is not threatening to the play's audience because he is introduced, in the very first song, as an abject failure. Bloom, simpering into his security blanket, is drawn at least as broadly in his own way as Bialystock is. They are both character types, defining a world of even broader character types.

At the start of the second act, the play goes further toward defining what audiences should expect from its characters by creating a romance between timid Leo Bloom and Ulla, the blonde sex goddess who leaves the male characters gape-jawed. If Bloom and Ulla were at all realistic, a romance between them would not make sense: Bloom is so timid that he has a panic attack when Bialystock raises his voice, while Ulla is so self-assured that she auditions with a song called "If You Got It, Flaunt It." Since they are general character types, though, their romance fits the story just fine, mostly as an indication of how producing a show has raised Bloom's confidence. More important than what it says about Bloom, though, is what their romance does for the structure of the show: it allows Brooks to introduce a romance, an element that every musical comedy is bound to have. The focus of *The Producers* is not supposed to be on characters, but on the musical comedy genre.

Such a stance might seem to cheapen the value of the play, relegating it to the category of "mere entertainment" instead of a serious work that deserves its many awards. But focusing on the show itself, and not the characters, is what makes *The Producers* relevant in the modern world. It is a show about show business, making its points without dwelling on them. As the script shows Bialystock and Bloom go through the process of devising the worst show possible, Brooks, by making the characters

impossible to take seriously, forces audiences to think about the show they are attending.

The Producers reflects on itself in the way that it pays homage to the musicals of the 1940s and 1950s in its tunes, choreography, characterizations, and plot. To all of the retrospective elements of the show, Brooks has added a very modern element by consciously trying to offend prevailing sensibilities. At an earlier time□say, the time when the play is set□the offense may have come from the very presence of an integrated chorus, or of openly gay characters. The world has changed, though. For modern audiences, the element of shock, though mild, derives from the ways that minorities are treated onstage. Society has come so far beyond stereotyping that even bringing out these old characterizations of the sexpot, the schnorrer, the dirty old women, and the milquetoast makes audience stop and wonder if their mere presence is offensive. In fact, none of these comic characters makes a statement about people in general, so, no, they are not actually objectionable. But they *seem* wrong, and that makes this musical comedy seem like it is flaunting the social rules.

The most contemporary area of offensiveness is in Brooks's handling of its gay characters. Characters like Roger De Bris and his "common-law assistant" Carmen Ghia are tagged as ridiculous from the moment they are introduced, with foolish names and costumes. They have a production team of gay stereotypes clearly derived from the openly gay 1970s musical group The Village People, as well as a signature song which uses the word "gay" every few lines. It all seems as if they should be scandalous. In contemporary society, after all, there is no more question of equal rights for races or genders, but the legal battles over the rights of gay couples to marry and adopt keep this issue in the news. In fact, these gay characters are more likely to amuse than offend gay rights advocates. In a song like "Keep it Gay," *The Producers* accomplishes three things simultaneously: it taps into the backwards-looking nostalgia for 1950s and 1960s attitudes; it touches on a contemporary social issue; and it shows Brook's subtle touch, in being able to go near controversial subject matter without raising ire.

The central gag of *The Producers*□the sight of Adolf Hitler interpreted by a swishing, effeminate homosexual□is so obvious that it should have audiences enraged□not because Hitler is praised, but because he is so universally despised that, in mocking him, Brooks sets his sights so low. The humor relies on the contemporary notion, which is the basis of shock humor, that each person will feel that they will get the joke but that the person sitting next to them might be outraged. Aside from a very few extremists, though, there really is no group that is going to object to this play ridiculing Hitler. Except for a very few audience members who might be attending a musical comedy but have absolutely no sense of humor, there is very little danger that anyone could watch Roger De Bris's mincing and not realize that Hitler is being mocked. At the core of this play is a scandal in theory, but one that never really materializes, hence, the play's commercial success.

In the 1968 movie, Brooks cut between showing the debacle of the *Springtime for Hitler* musical onstage and showing the shocked faces of the audience members as they realized what they had stumbled into (apparently, having missed the play's subtitle, *A*

Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva in Berchtesgaden, when they purchased their tickets). The stage play□coming after a quarter century of what has come to be called, derisively, "political correctness"□relies on audiences to assume that someone around them is always going to be offended by something.

Brooks's *Springtime for Hitler* production number is one of the most rousing, whistle-able songs to play on a Broadway stage in years. Audiences do not have to be told that they like it. And, due to Brooks's careful use of stereotypes, they are well aware that what they like might offend others. All that is required for this play to work is that audiences believe that Bialystock and Bloom would be blind to the play's obvious charm. Their characters are shallow enough that it is not hard to believe anything of them: love, betrayal, male bonding, ignorance, principles or cowardice. All that matters for this to be a comedy is that people believe that Bialystock and Bloom are happy in the end and that the audience walks out of the theater happy.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *The Producers*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

The movie that *The Producers* was based on was only a moderate success when it was released in 1968, but it has gone on to become a cult classic. It stars Zero Mostel as Bialystock and Gene Wilder as Bloom. The film is available on a special edition DVD from MGM/UA.

The original Broadway cast album of *The Producers*, starring Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Brad Oscar, and Cady Huffmann, was recorded in 2001 and is available from Sony Classical.

Recording "The Producers": A Musical Romp with Mel Brooks is a DVD documentary that follows the in-studio recording of the Broadway cast album, featuring Brooks and all of the members of the original line-up. It was released by Sony Classical in 2001.

Topics for Further Study

Contact an attorney who specializes in entertainment law and find out why Bialystock and Bloom's scheme to over-sell a losing show would not work. Or why it would.

The centerpiece of this play is the production number "Springtime for Hitler," poking fun at the dictator who terrorized Europe in the middle of the twentieth century. Write a similar song to a modern dictator, such as Sadaam Hussein, that could be used in a mock musical about him.

Leo Bloom quits his accounting job because his boss, Mr. Marks, is such a tyrant. Interview several people about the worst employers they have ever had, and the actions that they dreamed of taking in order to leave their unhappy situations.

Franz Liebkind tells the producers a little-known (and probably wrong) fact, that Adolf Hitler's middle name was "Elizabeth." Find out the middle names of ten famous politicians and research why they were given those names.

At the end of the play, Leo Bloom has earned the right to wear a "producer hat." Research various hat styles and determine which would be appropriate for various professions that usually do not have hats, such as teacher, accountant, hairdresser, etc.

What Do I Read Next?

Brooks and co-writer Tom Meehan wrote supplemental essays and margin notes for a large, illustrated book of *The Producers* that was released by Roundtable Press in 2001.

Another musical that opened on Broadway at the same time as *The Producers* was Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis's *Urinetown*. More bitingly satirical, *Urinetown* is a parable about a futuristic world in which a malevolent corporation controls all of the public toilets and collects money from anyone who needs to use them. This play uses rousing music that is as reminiscent of the musical's glory days as that used in *The Producers*.

There are any number of good books showing what is required in putting on a musical production. One good contemporary example is Matthew White's *Staging a Musical* (1999), which covers all of the basic requirements in a straightforward way. It was published by Theatre Arts Books.

The year after *The Producers* opened, the big musical to open on Broadway was *Hairspray* (2002), also based on a semi-successful movie (in this case, a 1988 John Waters film). The book is by Mark O'Donnell, Marc Shaiman, Scott Wittmann, and Thomas Meehan.

There is a long history of making fun of Adolf Hitler. Even when he was at the height of his power, political cartoonists made a point of mocking him. Zbynek Zeman's book *Heckling Hitler*, published by I. B. Tauris in 1987, examines this.

Further Study

Flinn, Denny Martin, *Musical! A Grand Tour*, Schirmer Books, 1997.

Examining the history and different styles of stage musicals, Flinn ends his survey with the 1995—96 season, in despair that the era of Broadway musicals was over (a situation that *The Producers* was instrumental in changing).

Hofler, Robert, "Broadway Tuner Has the Reich Stuff," in *Variety*, April 16, 2001, p. 1.

Hofler's article, from the show-business trade paper *Variety*, examines the coming sensation of *The Producers* weeks before it even reached Broadway.

Holtzman, William, *Seesaw: A Dual Biography of Anne Bancroft and Mel Brooks*, Doubleday, 1979.

Not much has been written at length about Brooks's life, but this book, covering his early years with his wife, gives a good sense of the private man.

Jones, John Bush, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*, Brandeis University Press, 2003.

This book is exhaustive in its understanding of the ways in which musical theater reflects society.

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Project Editor
David Galens

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

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Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

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

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

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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