Red Roses for Me Study Guide

Red Roses for Me by Sean O’Casey

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

When Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me* was first published in 1943, his native Ireland was in a state of turmoil. Disputes between employers and workers and Catholics and Protestants, especially in Northern Ireland, often led to violence, making life uneasy for many. Yet when he wrote his play, O'Casey chose to focus on a much earlier time, 1913, when conditions in the southern city of Dublin were similar. The play was comparable in style to O'Casey's other plays. In fact, from his first full-length play, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (first performed in 1923), O'Casey established himself as a realistic writer and one of the first Irish dramatists to explore the modern problems in Ireland. Though *Red Roses for Me* addressed the turmoil in Ireland, many critics single it out for its autobiographical connections. In fact, critics often cite O'Casey's second volume of autobiography, *Pictures in the Hallway* (1942), as a direct influence on *Red Roses for Me*.

The play details the struggle of Ayamonn Breydon, a working-class Protestant hero, and his fellow workers against employers who refuse to pay an extra shilling a week. Through the use of Ayamonn, who is open-minded and sympathetic to many others, including Catholics and even an atheist, O'Casey explores the thorny religious and labor disputes in his native land and demonstrates his support for Ireland's working class. *Red Roses for Me* has never been as popular as O'Casey's earlier plays, but some critics praise it for its use of symbolism, most notably in the third act, where Ayamonn's rousing, patriotic speech coincides with a gray Dublin being symbolically transformed into a shining, golden city through the use of stage lighting. A copy of the drama can be found in the paperback version of *Sean O'Casey: Plays One*, published by Faber & Faber in 1999.

Author Biography

O'Casey was born John Casey on March 30, 1880, in Dublin, Ireland. The youngest of eight children, O'Casey is one of the five that survived past early childhood. O'Casey's father died when the author was only six years old, creating large financial problems for the rest of the family. Due to these circumstances, as well as a childhood eye disease that affected his vision throughout his life, O'Casey received very little formal schooling. Despite his eye condition, however, the author began in his early teens to teach himself to read, and he read Shakespeare and other classics. At the age of fourteen, he also began to work various odd jobs, including clerical positions and manual labor, although he also spent long periods of time unemployed. From 1901 to 1911, O'Casey worked for the Great Northern Railway of Ireland. During the same time period, he renounced his Protestant faith and became increasingly agnostic. In 1913, O'Casey worked to support the union cause during the Great Dublin Lock-Out by publishing newspaper articles and devoting time as an organizational and secretarial volunteer. This event influenced the author's political stance, and during the same year he helped to form, and became the first secretary for, the Irish Citizen Army□a militant branch of the Irish trade-union movement. He left a year later, however, when the army's leadership turned toward a more nationalist, rather than a socialist, approach.

In the late 1910s, O'Casey began writing his first plays, several of which were rejected. His first full-length play, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, was performed at Dublin's renowned Abbey Theatre in 1923. The play became very popular, and the following spring the Abbey Theatre produced O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924). This was followed by *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), which has arguably become O'Casey's most popular play. These first three plays, all of which depicted the harsh physical and political realities of life in Dublin, set the tone for many of O'Casey's later works. In 1926, O'Casey was invited to London to receive the Hawthornden Prize for *Juno and the Paycock*. While he was there, he met the Irish actress, Eileen Carey Reynolds, and the two were married in 1927. The couple settled in England, where O'Casey wrote *The Silver Tassie* (1929), a play that criticized the events of World War I and the effect that this monumental conflict had on society. The experimental play was rejected by the Abbey Theatre, so O'Casey had it produced in London, where it was a critical success but a popular failure. During the 1930s, O'Casey produced very little drama and began to focus instead on criticism, short stories, and autobiographical writings, the first of which was *I Knock at the Door* (1939). During the 1940s and early 1950s, O'Casey produced five more volumes of autobiography. He also wrote *Red Roses for Me* (1943), which most critics agree is O'Casey's most autobiographical work. O'Casey died on September 18, 1964, in Torquay, England.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Red Roses for Me begins in the apartment of Mrs. Breydon and her son, Ayamonn. The two talk about the impending strike between the employers and the workers, who demand an extra shilling a week in pay. Ayamonn notes that the play will only be put on as a fund-raiser if the strike takes place. They discuss Ayamonn's relationship with Sheila Moorneen, a Catholic girl. Mrs. Breydon does not approve of the relationship because the Breydons are Protestants and there is tension between the two religious groups. Mrs. Breydon also says that Sheila is a proper girl who wants to be pampered and that Ayamonn cannot indulge her on his meager salary.

Eeada, Dympna, and Finnoola, who are an old, a middle-aged, and a young woman, respectively, open the door, bringing with them a dingy statue of the Virgin Mary, a Catholic symbol, and ask Mrs. Breydon for some soap to clean the statue. Mrs. Breydon leaves with them to go visit a sick neighbor. Sheila comes in but says she cannot stay long. Sheila notes to Ayamonn that she had knocked at the door earlier while Ayamonn was practicing and is upset that Ayamonn did not open the door. Ayamonn tries to blow over this fight by being romantic and playful, but Sheila asks him to be serious and tells him that she cannot go out with him the next night because she has a church function. She is also worried about Ayamonn's involvement in the strike and says that if they are going to be together in the future, he needs to focus on reality. Ayamonn refuses to get serious, and Sheila tries to leave.

They are interrupted by the landlord, Brennan, who brings with him one of the men who will be singing in the play. Sheila is forced to listen to the song, which is interrupted first by Roory O'Balacaun, one of the potential strikers, and then by Ayamonn's atheist friend, Tim Mullcanny, who mocks the religious quality of the song. Sheila uses the interruption to get up and leave, telling Ayamonn that their relationship is over. The three women from earlier in the play burst in, saying that the Virgin Mary statue has been stolen. Ayamonn says that he will help the women search for the statue.

Act 2

The second act begins in the Breydon home on a later night. Brennan comes in, carrying the Catholic statue, explaining that he took it to polish it up for the sake of the little Catholic girl downstairs who gazes at the statue. He puts the cleaned statue back in its place and comes back, followed by Roory, a Catholic. The two men discuss Mullcanny, who has angered the population with his secular criticisms of religion. Roory and Brennan get into a religious debate over the ideals of Catholicism versus Protestantism, which is interrupted by the arrival of Mullcanny, who gives Ayamonn a book about evolution and then leaves. Sheila arrives and tries again to convince Ayamonn that he should give up his artistic ways and his unsavory associations. She

tells him that she has heard the strike is going to take place and that if Ayamonn does not get involved, he will be made a foreman. Ayamonn refuses and is angry that she asked him to betray his coworkers.

They are interrupted by the frantic arrival of Mullcanny, who has been beaten up by a religious mob. The mob throws two stones through the windows of the Breydon home. Ayamonn rushes outside, while Brennan, Roory, and Sheila all argue with Mullcanny about his nonreligious views. Ayamonn and his mother come in, followed by Eeada, Dympna, Finnoola, and several others, all of whom are elated that the statue has been cleaned up and returned to its place. Sheila tries to renew her conversation with Ayamonn, but he refuses to talk about it anymore. The Protestant rector, a friend of Ayamonn's, comes in, saying he has a warning. Two railwaymen arrive shortly thereafter, and collectively the three men tell Ayamonn that the union's strike meeting has been forbidden and that the authorities will use force to break it up if necessary. The railwaymen ask Ayamonn to be one of the speakers at the meeting, and, against Sheila's protests, Ayamonn agrees.

Act 3

The third act takes place on a bridge that overlooks Dublin. The sky is a gloomy gray, and a number of characters lounge dispiritedly around the bridge. Eeada and Dympna call out their sales pitches for violets and apples, respectively. The crowd talks about how Dublin used to be a great city but now it is dead. The rector and the inspector walk by. While the rector gives Eeada and Dympna a few coins, the inspector looks down on them, and says that Ayamonn is a similar sort. The rector disagrees, and the two walk off. Brennan arrives and tries to sing a song, but the largely Catholic crowd shoos him away. Ayamonn and Roory arrive, and Ayamonn stays to talk to the crowd. As he begins to speak about how, through efforts like the strike, Dublin can be remade into a great city once again, the dark sky gets steadily lighter. Ayamonn invokes images of ancient Irish heroes and begins to sing, which prompts all of the assembled men and women to rise. Finnoola and Ayamonn dance together, ending up in each other's arms. At this point, the sun is shining on Dublin and all of the people at the bridge, making it seem like a golden city. Yet, as the song and dance ends, the sound of marching is heard offstage, and the scene darkens again. Although Finnoola urges Ayamonn to stay with her, he kisses her and tells her he has to go.

Act 4

The fourth act takes place on the grounds of a Protestant church, where the rector is preparing his sermon for the following day's Easter ceremony. Samuel, the verger, tells the rector that two of the church's vestrymen, Dowzard and Foster, have a problem with the Catholic-style daffodil cross that Ayamonn made. The rector insists that they use Ayamonn's cross in the ceremony, saying he will place it on the Communion table himself. Mrs. Breydon and Sheila arrive, followed by Ayamonn, who arrives at the same time as the inspector (one of the men charged with breaking up the strike meeting). The

inspector and Ayamonn argue over this meeting, and everybody except the rector tries to convince Ayamonn that going to the meeting is a bad idea. Ayamonn leaves, and a short time later the worker crowd passes by. Dowzard and Foster, who are against the strike, seek cover from the worker mob on the grounds of the church.

The rector comes out to see what all of the commotion is about, and the two men tell him to kick Ayamonn out of the vestry, since he is leading the mob. The rector refuses, and in their fury Dowzard grabs the daffodil cross while Foster throws it to the ground and jumps on it. Meanwhile, the police have attacked the workers and sounds of rifle fire are heard offstage. A crowd of men and women rushes onto the church grounds. Finnoola arrives, obviously wounded, and says that Ayamonn has been shot and killed. She delivers Ayamonn's dying words to the rector, which include asking the rector to watch over Mrs. Breydon, as well as keeping Ayamonn's body in the Protestant church that night.

The curtain comes down, indicating the passage of hours, and rises again. It is now evening, and several of the characters from the play are gathered on the church's grounds. Dowzard argues with the rector, telling him that half of the congregation is against having Ayamonn's body in the church, since they do not want to be associated with the labor dispute. A group of people arrives, carrying Ayamonn's covered-up body on a stretcher, and Sheila lays a bunch of red roses on the body's chest. The inspector speaks with Sheila, telling her that he tried to protect Ayamonn by forcing his horse in between the bullets and Ayamonn. His romantic intent is clear, but Sheila refuses him and runs off. The inspector curses the assembled men and women, forcing all of them except Brennan to scatter. The rector and Mrs. Breydon come out of the church, and the rector tells Samuel to leave the lights on all night so that Ayamonn's body will not be in the dark. Brennan pays Samuel to leave the church door open for a few minutes so that Brennan can sing a song for Ayamonn.

Characters

Brennan

Brennan is a devout Protestant and the landlord of a few Dublin tenement houses, including the one that contains the Breydons' apartment. Brennan is fanatical about the safety of his money and asks everybody he meets whether or not his money is safe in the Bank of Ireland. Brennan carries a melodeon, which he plays often. He also lines up a singer for the play that Ayamonn and the others plan on staging to raise funds for the strikers. Although he is a devout Protestant and gets into religious arguments with Roory, Mullcanny, and other Catholics, he takes it upon himself to remove the Catholic statue of the Virgin Mary from the church across the street, clean it up, and replace it. He does this because he is fond of the Catholic girl in the downstairs apartment, who gazes upon this statue every day. At the bridge, Brennan tries to sing a song to the men and women who are dozing there, but they chase him away. Brennan, like Samuel, Dowzard, and Foster, is offended by Ayamonn's daffodil cross, which he sees as a popish item. Still, when Ayamonn's body is brought into the church, the tightfisted Brennan displays his fondness for his tenant when he pays Samuel to leave the church door open while Brennan plays a song for Ayamonn.

Brennan o' the Moor

See Brennan

Ayamonn Breydon

Ayamonn is the son of Mrs. Breydon and a hero among his worker friends, for whom he martyrs himself. Although he is a Protestant, Ayamonn regularly keeps company with Catholics and even an atheist□his friend Mullcanny. Ayamonn is most concerned with the truth and with doing what is right. In the beginning of the play, he is in love with Sheila Moorneen, a Catholic. Because their parents do not approve of their interreligious relationship, they mainly meet in secret. When Sheila stops off at the Breydons' apartment to try to talk to him about their relationship, he is playful and romantic when she wants him to be serious. She tries to explain to him that he must give up his foolish artistic pursuits and affiliations with workers' strikes and such if he ever wants to be with her. When Ayamonn refuses to have a serious conversation with her, she says that their relationship is over and storms out.

Ayamonn survives on very little sleep, spending most of his time working and helping others, including his worker friends that are contemplating the strike over a wage dispute. Because Ayamonn is such a well-known and liked figure in the community, the workers ask him to speak at the strike meeting, and, against Sheila's wishes, he agrees.

Once he has agreed to this, Ayamonn becomes the figurehead for this issue, with both sides trying to convince him to either take part in or avoid the strike. When Sheila finds out that Ayamonn can get a plush foreman position if he betrays his friends and sits out of the strike meeting, she asks Ayamonn to take the deal, and he is shocked that she even asks. In addition to the labor dispute, Ayamonn also sparks a religious controversy when he creates a Catholic-style daffodil cross to display in his Protestant church. Ayamonn believes in solidarity, and at the bridge he inspires a group of men and women by invoking ancient Celtic heroes, saying that gray Dublin can be made into a great city again if people band together, embrace their Celtic heritage, and fight for what is right. He dances with Finnoola during this inspiring scene, but when she asks him to stay, he kisses her and says he must go. During the strike meeting, Ayamonn is shot and killed by the police, and Finnoola takes his last requests to the rector, who agrees to honor them by taking care of Mrs. Breydon and by keeping Ayamonn's body in the church that night.

Mrs. Breydon

Mrs. Breydon is Ayamonn's Protestant mother and a noted volunteer to both Protestants and Catholics in the community. In the beginning, Mrs. Breydon disapproves of Ayamonn's relationship with Sheila Moorneen, a Catholic, and tells her son that he can never provide the wealth that Sheila needs to sustain her lifestyle. Mrs. Breydon also criticizes her son's affiliation with the atheist Mullcanny. Furthermore, she does not understand why Ayamonn spends money on books and other artistic pursuits. Against her son's wishes, she goes out on rainy nights to tend to the sick and the dying in the community. When Mullcanny tries to spread his evolutionary beliefs and is attacked by an angry religious mob, Mrs. Breydon comes to his rescue. Mrs. Breydon tries to convince her son to stay away from the strike meeting, worried that he will be killed, as her husband□Ayamonn's father□died for following his beliefs, but, in the end, she relents and encourages Ayamonn to fight, and to win. When Ayamonn is killed, the Protestant rector agrees to honor Ayamonn's last wish and take care of Mrs. Breydon.

Reverend E. Clinton

Reverend Clinton, referred to throughout the play as the Protestant rector, is a friend of Ayamonn and the only one who supports him from beginning to end. When he hears that the police intend to break up the strike meeting, the rector goes to the Breydons' apartment to warn Ayamonn, but he refuses□as Sheila asks□to tell Ayamonn that it is God's will that Ayamonn sit out of the meeting. At the bridge the inspector looks down on the assembled poor men and women, but the rector takes pity on them and throws a few coins to Eeada and Dympna. At the church, many people again try to convince the rector that he needs to talk Ayamonn out of going to the meeting, but the rector refuses. When he hears from Finnoola that Ayamonn has been shot and killed, he agrees to honor Ayamonn's last requests, which include taking care of his mother and having his body kept in the church that night. The rector also agrees to leave the lights on in the church all night so that Ayamonn will not be in the dark.

Dowzard

Dowzard is a select vestryman in the Protestant church of St. Burnupus. He opposes the rector's support of Ayamonn and what he thinks are popish ways. When Ayamonn leads the workers' mob against the employers and their supporters, Dowzard gets caught in the crossfire and is almost stoned. As a result, Dowzard grabs Ayamonn's daffodil cross, which is then destroyed by Foster.

Dympna

Dympna is one of the three Catholic, female neighbors of the Breydons and is the middle-aged member of this trio. Dympna idolizes their dingy statue of the Virgin Mary and is distraught when it disappears while Brennan secretly cleans up the statue, restoring it to its former glory. Dympna believes that the statue's cleaning is a miracle. During the third act on the bridge, Dympna halfheartedly tries to sell violets. At the end of the play, Dympna is injured when the police break up the strike meeting, and she has to go to the hospital to get stitches.

Eeada

Eeada is the oldest of the three Catholic, female neighbors of the Breydons. Eeada idolizes a dingy statue of the Virgin Mary and is distraught when it disappears while Brennan secretly cleans up the statue, restoring it to its former glory. Eeada believes that the statue's cleaning is a miracle. During the third act on the bridge, Eeada halfheartedly tries to sell apples and cakes. At the end of the play, Eeada curses Ayamonn for getting her friend Dympna injured by the police during the strike meeting.

Inspector Finglas

Inspector Finglas is one of the local law enforcement officers who attacks the workers' mob. Finglas is interested in Sheila Moorneen, so when his officers attack the mob, he tries to protect Ayamonn, a fact that he flaunts to Sheila. His ploy does not work, however, because Sheila rejects him in the end.

Finnoola

Finnoola is the youngest of the three Catholic, female neighbors of the Breydons. Finnoola idolizes a dingy statue of the Virgin Mary and is distraught when it disappears when Brennan secretly cleans up the statue, restoring it to its former glory. During the third act on the bridge, Finnoola dances with Ayamonn and encourages him to stay with her instead of going off to the strike meeting. At the end of the play, Finnoola is injured by a horse hoof when the police break up the strike meeting, but she limps back to the church to deliver Ayamonn's dying words to the rector.

Foster

Foster is a select vestryman in the Protestant church of St. Burnupus. He opposes the rector's support of Ayamonn and what he thinks are popish ways. When Ayamonn leads the workers' mob against the employers and their supporters, Foster gets caught in the crossfire and is almost stoned. As a result, Foster grabs Ayamonn's daffodil cross from Dowzard and throws it to the ground and then jumps up and down on it.

The Inspector

See Inspector Finglas

Sheila Moorneen

Sheila Moorneen is a Catholic girl and the love interest of Ayamonn. At the beginning of the play, Sheila has been meeting with Ayamonn in secret, whenever possible, since their parents do not approve of the interreligious relationship. When Sheila comes to talk to Ayamonn about their relationship, he tries to be romantic and playful, but she asks him to be serious. When he is not, she says that their relationship is over because it can never work if he insists on getting involved in fruitless struggles such as the dispute between the employers and workers. Sheila storms out but comes back later, saying that she has heard that if Ayamonn will betray his fellow strikers, he will be assured a foreman's job. Sheila, who is used to the finer things in life, wants Ayamonn to take this offer so they can marry, and she can maintain her lifestyle. Ayamonn is offended and refuses. Sheila tries, on two separate occasions, to get the rector to convince Ayamonn that sitting out of the strike is the right thing to do, but the rector also refuses. When Ayamonn's body is brought into the church, Sheila places red roses on the body's chest. Although the inspector tries to court Sheila, she refuses him, obviously moved by Ayamonn's sacrifice.

Tim Mullcanny

Mullcanny is a friend of Ayamonn and an atheist whose evolutionary beliefs get him, and the Breydons, into trouble. Mullcanny is known for his attempts to undermine religious belief in the Dublin community, which is already a religious hotbed due to the disputes between Catholics and Protestants. When a religious mob beats Mullcanny up, Mrs. Breydon comes to his rescue, and Ayamonn gives him shelter in their apartment. As a result, the mob throws rocks through the Breydons' windows.

Roory O'Balacaun

Roory is a friend of Ayamonn's and a devout Irish Catholic, who also believes that Ireland should rule itself, not be under the rule of England. Throughout the play, Roory argues the virtues of Catholicism and self-rule to many of the other characters.

The Protestant Rector

See Reverend E. Clinton

Samuel

Samuel is the verger in the Protestant church of St. Burnupus. He opposes the rector's support of Ayamonn and what he thinks are popish ways. He is particularly concerned when he notices that Dowzard and Foster disapprove of Ayamonn's daffodil cross, and he tries unsuccessfully to talk the rector out of displaying the cross at the Easter ceremony. He also disapproves of the rector leaving the light on in the church so that Ayamonn's body does not have to sit in the dark.

Themes

Labor

While the play explores many issues, the one that ties everything together is the Irish labor dispute between the employers and the workers. Mrs. Breydon is the first one to mention it: "There's this sorryful sthrike, too, about to come down on top of us." Although Ayamonn says confidently that "There will be no strike. The bosses won't fight. They'll grant the extra shilling a week demanded," it becomes increasingly clear as the play progresses that the strike is going to happen. Sheila tries to talk Ayamonn out of participating in the strike: "Oh, why do you meddle with those sort of things!" The potential strike becomes increasingly dangerous, as Sheila notes to Ayamonn: "I've been told that the strike is bound to take place; there is bound to be trouble." Sheila tries to get Ayamonn to betray his fellow workers: "if you divide yourself from the foolish men, and stick to your job, you'll soon be a foreman of some kind or other." While Ayamonn is open-minded to the other differences between him and Sheila, he cannot believe that she is asking him to blast "the gay hopes of my comrades," and he tells her, "Go to hell, girl, I have a soul to save as well as you." Ayamonn believes in worker solidarity and tells Sheila of his coworkers, "Whatever they may say or do, they remain my brothers and sisters."

Ayamonn's unflinching support of the workers leads the group to ask him "to be one of the speakers on the platform of the meeting." The strike meeting□and Ayamonn himself as the figurehead for the workers□becomes the focus of the play from this point on. People come by to warn Ayamonn of the potential danger of going to the meeting. For example, the rector notes, "It's right for me to warn you, Ayamonn, and you, men, that the Authorities are determined to prevent the meeting; and that you run a grave risk in defying them." Sheila appeals to the rector to tell Ayamonn that God is against the strike meeting, but the rector refuses: "Who am I to say that God's against it? . . . If they be his brothers, he does well among them." The use of the word "brothers" recalls Ayamonn's reference and underscores the idea of worker solidarity.

Religion

Religion is another major theme in the play, in two ways. First, there is the heated dispute between Catholics and Protestants. Unlike the labor dispute, however, members of the two groups do associate with each other. In fact, the Breydons' apartment is located in a tenement building that houses both Protestants and Catholics, a situation that would never happen between working-class and wealthy people. These two religious groups interact with each other throughout the play. In many situations, these groups argue, most notably when Brennan, a devout Protestant, argues with Roory, a devout Catholic. Brennan tells Roory, "God save th' King, an' tae hull with th' Pope!" while Roory counters with "You damned bigot□to hell with th' King, an' God save th' Pope!"

Not everybody is as diametrically opposed to other religions, however. In fact, even Brennan himself is swayed to help the Catholics. When he sees that their statue of the Virgin Mary is dirty, he takes it, cleans it, and puts it back, all because he is fond of the little Catholic girl downstairs and wants her to see a clean statue. Others coexist peacefully, too. For example, Mrs. Breydon routinely helps the sick and the dying, regardless of their religion. Likewise, Mrs. Breydon's three female neighbors often visit and are sincere in their thanks when Mrs. Breydon gives them some soap to clean up the statue. As Eeada says, "Thank you, ma'am, an' though y'are of a different persuasion, Our Blessed Lady of Eblana's poor'll bless you an' your fine son for this little tribute to Her honour." But even when Catholics and Protestants love each other, as in the relationship of the Protestant Ayamonn and the Catholic Sheila, their respective people do not always approve. As a result, in order to see each other without repercussion, Ayamonn and Sheila have set up a secret meeting place.

Besides the Catholics versus Protestant issue, there is also the issue of religion in general versus atheism. With the exception of Ayamonn, who supports almost anything except worker oppression, all of the other characters in the play unite against Mullcanny, an atheist who promotes evolutionary ideas.

Style

Setting

As a regional Irish story, the play's setting is crucial to the plot. The play takes place in Ireland, which has a notably stormy history when it comes to both religious and labor disputes. In addition to these issues, which are explored throughout the play, O'Casey chooses to place the play in a poor tenement house in the Dublin slums. The stage notes describe the Breydons' apartment as "*two rather dilapidated rooms in a poor working-class locality*." This is important to the plot because the protagonist, Ayamonn, is a working-class hero who martyrs himself for their cause. By placing the play within the slums, then, the audience gets to see life from the perspective of the working class, and thus roots for Ayamonn and his cause.

Language

As in most of O'Casey's works, this play relies on the use of authentic Irish common speech, identified with a thick Irish brogue, or accent, to identify the working-class characters. For example, during one of the first conversations between Ayamonn and his mother, Mrs. Breydon says, "You'll undermine your health with all you're doin,' tearin' away what's left of your time be runnin' afther□"The use of the word "doin,"' instead of "doing"; "afther," instead of "after"; and "runnin,"' instead of "running"□all uses that are not technically proper English□identify the speech as common. Likewise, the omission of the word "to," which in proper English would precede the phrase "be runnin' afther," identifies the language as common speech.

In fact, O'Casey uses language throughout the play to indicate the degree to which a character is part of the working class. For example, Ayamonn, a member of the working class who nevertheless has artistic aspirations, uses some accented language but not as much as, for example, Roory, a true working-class man who says such things as, "Here y'are, Ayamonn, me son, avic's the th' Irish magazines I got me friend to pinch for you." At the other extreme, characters such as the inspector speak in near-perfect English: "Come, Sheila, come, and let us put these things away from us as we saunter slowly home." Sheila herself speaks in near-perfect English, too, a sign of her wealthy upbringing. This proper language becomes one of the many signs that the relationship between her and Ayamonn, her working-class boyfriend, will never work out. In the context of the play, Ayamonn belongs more with the working-class girl, Finnoola, who prefers the "patched coat, shaky shoes, an' white hungry face of th' Irish rebel"□men like Ayamonn.

Foreshadowing

O'Casey places several clues in the play, which help to foreshadow, or predict, Ayamonn's death. These include the many references to Mullcanny, who many people

predict will get into trouble if he does not stop talking about evolution. Mrs. Breydon is the first one to say "he'll meet with a mishap, some day, if he doesn't keep his mouth shut." When Mullcanny leaves the Breydon apartment after criticizing the Catholic faith, Eeada also gives a warning: "The fella that's gone'll have a rough end, jeerin' things sacred to our feelin.'" In fact, Mullcanny does get into trouble, when he tries "to show a fellow the foolishness of faith in a hereafter." An angry mob attacks Mullcanny, who is saved by the arrival of Mrs. Breydon. When Mullcanny seeks refuge at the Breydon apartment, the mob turns its focus, throwing stones through the window of the apartment. Up until now, Ayamonn has been liked by most people in the community, but when he aligns himself with Mullcanny, the mob turns on him, too. This subtle shift is a clue of what is to come, as Ayamonn aligns himself more with the workers' cause, putting himself squarely in the sights of the employers, the police, and anybody else who is opposed to the workers.

O'Casey offers other clues of Ayamonn's impending death, such as when he calls in the stage directions for the stage lighting to become dark and for Ayamonn's head to be "*set in a streak of sunlight, looking like the severed head of Dunn-Bo speaking out of the darkness*." At the end of the same act, O'Casey includes another clue, when Finnoola tries to get Ayamonn to stay with her. Instead of telling her he will see her later, he tells her to "marry well, an' rear up children fair as Emer was." If Ayamonn expected to live, he would have told Finnoola that they could revisit the possibility of their courtship after the strike meeting. But Ayamonn suspects, and suggests through his choice of words, that the meeting will lead to his death.

Historical Context

The Great Dublin Lock-Out of 1913

In his stage directions, O'Casey is vague about when the play is supposed to take place. But as Maureen Malone says in her 1966 article on the play in *Modern Drama*, "The period of the play, mentioned in the directions merely as 'a little time ago,' is clearly in the year 1913, the time of the great Transport and General Workers Union Strike in Dublin." This strike occurred during a time of unrest between employers and workers in Dublin. The event happened after transport employers, worried about their employees getting involved in labor leader Jim Larkin's new trade union, locked out these employees. The employers said that the employees could not return to work until they renounced their membership in Larkin's union. The move backfired on the employers, however, when Larkin and several others organized a strike among the majority of Dublin's laborers. During the strike, Larkin was arrested, and the huge mass of employees fought with police. In the process, about five hundred people were injured.

World War II

Although O'Casey wrote about 1913 in *Red Roses for Me*, he was writing the play at the same time that the world was in the midst of a much greater conflict: the Second World War. While Ireland's isolated location and decision to remain neutral during the war kept the region largely exempt from the conflict, some members of Ireland's military deserted to go serve with British soldiers during the war, largely because the pay was better. Great Britain, where O'Casey was living at the time he wrote the play, was one of the main players in the worldwide conflict. In fact, as Ronald Ayling notes in his entry on O'Casey for *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, "The more optimistic social resolution to" the play "may also have been occasioned by O'Casey's firsthand observation of the stiffened British opposition to Nazism in the early months after the fall of France in 1940." World War II was such a monumental event that it is commonly used as a cultural divider for the twentieth century. Citizens in England and elsewhere experienced the threat of German air raids, while soldiers witnessed unspeakable horrors on the battlefields. World War II was a harrowing experience for soldiers on both sides of the conflict, but infantrymen often experienced the most emotional and physical anguish. Left out in the open on a battlefield, infantry troops had to dig foxholes to afford themselves some protection from other infantry, attacks by fighter planes, and other horrors. Many soldiers lived in a state of constant anticipation, never knowing when death might come to take them. For the wives and families of soldiers□just as for the wives and families of union supporters in 1913 Ireland□the conflict was a time of loneliness and fear, as many wondered whether their loved ones would return home safely, or be killed as Ayamonn is killed in *Red Roses for Me*.

Critical Overview

O'Casey's works have always been known, first and foremost, for their realistic elements. Before O'Casey, most Irish dramas were drastically different. As Bernard Benstock says in his 1970 book *Sean O'Casey*, O'Casey "changed the nature of Irish drama from peasant comedies to a presumably realistic drama of Dublin slum life." In fact, as Maureen Malone notes about the play, "Among the criticisms levelled at the early plays of Sean O'Casey was the accusation that he had merely presented a factual commentary upon contemporary history." O'Casey's reputation steadily improved throughout his career, and, as Ronald Ayling notes, O'Casey has long been recognized "as the first and best dramatist of the Dublin tenements during the Irish 'troubles' (1916—1923)."

By the time he wrote *Red Roses for Me*, O'Casey had begun to mix realistic techniques with other techniques such as symbolism. Yet, while some critics discuss these aspects of the play, much of the criticism discusses the play's autobiographical aspects, particularly as they relate to history. As Malone says, the play "is bound more closely than any other to memories of his [O'Casey's] early life in Ireland and to the history taking shape there in 1913." And Ayling says that "the Great Dublin Lock Out of 1913 was an emotional and intellectual watershed in O'Casey's life." Malone notes one specific instance in the play that points to O'Casey's fervent support of the union men during the strike: "outside Ayamonn's window, the view of a railway signal acts as a constant reminder that he, too, is a supporter of the Transport Union, and against all temptations he sides with the railway men."

Critics also focus specifically on the autobiographical aspects of the play. Ayling calls the drama O'Casey's "most directly autobiographical play" and, like other critics, notes that the second volume of O'Casey's autobiography, "*Pictures in the Hallway*, was an undoubted influence upon *Red Roses for Me*." Likewise, Benstock calls the play O'Casey's "most autobiographic statement in drama," and Malone says that "all the main characters are lifted straight out of O'Casey's account of his own experiences in his autobiography."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses O'Casey's use of symbolism in the play.

Beginning with his first plays, O'Casey was noted for his use of realism in drama. As Bernard Benstock says in his book *Sean O'Casey*, O'Casey "changed the nature of Irish drama from peasant comedies to a presumably realistic drama of Dublin slum life." As he progressed in his career, O'Casey continued to use realistic elements in his plays, but he also began to explore the use of literary techniques such as symbolism. A symbol is a physical object, action, or gesture that also represents an abstract concept, without losing its original identity. Symbols appear in literature in one of two ways: They can be local symbols, meaning that their symbolism is only relevant within a specific literary work; they can also be universal symbols, meaning that their symbolism is based on traditional associations that are widely recognized, regardless of context. In her 1966 essay on the play for *Modern Drama*, Maureen Malone sees in the play two main, localized symbols: the dingy statue of the Virgin Mary and the red roses. She sees the statue as "a representation of the tenement dwellers themselves," while the red roses "signify courage and sacrifice." But there are many other symbols in the play. In fact, the play's main conflicts are driven by symbolism.

In the beginning, the audience is introduced to Ayamonn Breydon, a dreamy character who tries to live life symbolically through his pursuit of many arts. As his mother says, Ayamonn is always "Sketchin,' readin,' makin' songs, an' learnin' Shakespeare; if you had a piano, you'd be thryin' to learn music. Why don't you stick at one thing, an' leave the others alone?" But Ayamonn is not capable of doing this and tells his mother that "They are all lovely, and my life needs them all."

This artistic idealism makes Ayamonn hopeful that the employers will grant the workers their extra shilling a week because it is such a small amount for the employers to pay. He also notes to his mother that, at this point, he does not have much to do with the strike, saying, "I'm with the men, spoke at a meeting in favour of the demand, and that's all." But the strike takes on greater symbolic importance as the play progresses. When Ayamonn hears that the strike is going to take place and that, furthermore, the authorities have sent out a written notice forbidding it, Ayamonn shows his defiance by "*setting it alight at the fire and waiting till it falls to ashes*." This symbolic act and defiant attitude is one of the reasons that the railwaymen ask Ayamonn to "be one of the speakers on the platform at the meeting," a highly visible post that sets Ayamonn up as a symbol of the workers' resistance. Even the disputed shilling takes on greater importance when the employers deny it to the workers. In his debate with the inspector at the end of the play, Ayamonn admits that it is not a lot of money but says that the amount is irrelevant; it is the symbolic quality of the money as a sign of progress that counts: "A shilling's little to you, and less to many; to us it is . . . the first step taken in the march of a thousand miles."

In addition to increasing his level of participation in the strike, Ayamonn's symbolic views and actions also harm his relationship with Sheila. When she tries to get him to be serious at the beginning of the play, he answers her in symbolic language, saying that it is not time to be serious: "Soon enough to browse with wisdom when Time's grey finger puts a warning speck on the crimson rose of youth." As their conversation continues in this manner, Sheila gets angry, telling Ayamonn, "I'll listen no more; I'll go. You want to make me a spark in a mere illusion."

The argument ultimately ends with Sheila storming out, but not before another conflict is introduced: the conflict between England and Ireland. Roory O'Balacaun, one of the potential strikers who believes that Ireland should rule itself and who advocates breaking all ties with England, comes into the Breydon home and hears them practicing the English song for the strike fund-raiser. He takes issue with the song, which he sees as a symbol of England and English rule: "I don't stand for a foreign Minsthrel Show bein' held."

This conflict, in turn, is interrupted by the arrival of Eeada, Dympna, and Finnoola, who are distraught that their Virgin Mary statue is missing. To the women and the other Catholics, the statue is a religious symbol of great importance, and its disappearance troubles them and sparks some of the most heated conflicts in the play□the debates between the Catholics and the Protestants. For example, when he hears that the statue is gone, Brennan, a devout Catholic, says, "An' a good job, too. [*Passionately*] Inflamin' yourselves with idols that have eyes an' see not; ears, an' hear not; an' have hands that handle not." This quote gets to the crux of the Catholic versus Protestant debate. Catholics believe that it is okay to pray to representations of Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary, while Protestants think that these symbols are false idols, preferring only to pray to Jesus himself. Yet, despite his distaste for Catholicism, Brennan reveals later to Ayamonn and Mrs. Breydon that he has taken the Virgin Mary statue so that he can polish it. He explains that he has done this so that the little Catholic girl who lives downstairs□and whom he is very fond of□will have a clean statue to look at. Still, Brennan is a little hesitant about his actions, saying, "Though, mind you, me thrue mind misgives me for decoratin' what's a charm to the people of Judah in th' worship of idols."

The statue is not the only religious symbol that angers Protestants in the play. Certain members of Ayamonn's Protestant church take issue with the daffodil cross that Ayamonn creates for Easter mass, thinking that it is too much like a symbolic Catholic cross. "Are you goin' to be a party to th' plastherin' of Popish emblems over a Protestan' church?" Samuel asks the rector. The rector disagrees, saying that the daffodils "simply signify the new life that Spring gives; and we connect them in a symbolic way, quite innocently, with our Blessed Lord's Rising." Samuel is not convinced, however, and neither are other Protestants, such as Brennan, who exclaims, "Popery, be God!"

The cross takes on even greater symbolic meaning when it is linked with Ayamonn's death. O'Casey does this very subtly, first by having Foster and Dowzard destroy the cross. When Foster tells the rector that Ayamonn will soon be running for cover from the police, the rector says, "The cross of Christ be between him and all harm!" Dowzard uses this opportunity to grab Ayamonn's daffodil cross, calling it "a Popish symbol!"

Foster is not satisfied, and, as the stage directions note, "*He snatches the cross of flowers from Dowzard, flings it on the ground and dances on it*." O'Casey's timing of this act is deliberate, since the destruction of Ayamonn's cross takes place at approximately the same time that Ayamonn is being shot to death by the police offstage—an event that is soon announced by Finnoola. When the rector "*picks up the broken cross of flowers and is silent for a few moments*" and then says a prayer for Ayamonn, the symbol of the cross as a representation of Ayamonn's life is complete.

Ayamonn's death is symbolic in another way, because, through his death, he becomes a martyr for the workers' cause, something that he seems to have planned. That is, throughout the play, Ayamonn is warned by friends and foes alike that if he takes part in the strike meeting, he is putting himself in grave danger. But he refuses to back down. Ayamonn, unlike Sheila or the inspector or many other characters, is able to look beyond the importance of his own, individual life, to the greater welfare of Dublin's workers. As Finnoola says, Ayamonn's dying words indicate that his death was a necessary step to help the workers' cause: "He said this day's but a day's work done, an' it'll be begun again tomorrow."

Ayamonn's rousing speech to the beggars on the bridge, in the act before his death, helps underscore Ayamonn's commitment to this cause. He says, "our sthrike is yours. A step ahead for us today; another one for you tomorrow. We who have known, and know, the emptiness of life shall know its fullness." To help inspire the beggars, Ayamonn draws on other symbols, namely the heroes from Ireland's past. As Ronald Rollins notes in his 1980 essay on the play in *Irish University Review*, "the act reflecting grey Dublin's transformation into a shining city of gold and bronze by an unusual sunset . . . reads like a mini-encyclopedia of Celtic mythology." These mythic heroes symbolize Ireland's strength, which Ayamonn asks the beggars to draw on to fight their oppressors and ensure a shining future for their beloved city. This shining future is itself expressed symbolically—and literally—by the effective use of stage lighting, which casts Dublin and all of the beggars in a golden light. Ayamonn's speech, coupled with this changing light, gives the beggars a momentary hope that, by banding together, they can prevail against their oppressors and build a better life for themselves. This hope is ultimately reinforced at the end of the play when O'Casey has the rector leave the light—traditionally a symbol of hope—on in the church.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on *Red Roses for Me*, in *Drama for Students*, Gale, 2004.

Topics for Further Study

Imagine that you are a teenager living during the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out. Write a journal entry that describes a typical day in your life during this event.

Find another society, from any period in human history, which was or is involved in a long-standing labor conflict. Research both sides of the conflict and plot the main points of each argument on a chart.

Choose a famous Irish person from any century before the twentieth century. Write a biography about this person.

Choose another artistic medium besides writing, such as art or film and select a work that you think best underscores the themes of *Red Roses for Me*. Write a short report that explains why you chose this piece.

Imagine that you are filming *Red Roses for Me* as a modern-day movie. Write a short script indicating how you would film the transformational scene on the bridge in the third act, including any special effects you might use.

Compare and Contrast

1910s: Around 100,000 of Dublin's workers stage a large strike in response to the Great Dublin Lock-Out of 1913. The strike ends after much violence.

Early 1940s: Two thousand Dublin municipal workers strike in 1940. The strike is ended through negotiations, and the Trade Union Act of 1941 is passed to try to set ground rules for future labor disputes and to avoid expensive strikes.

Today: Ireland has the fastest growing economy in Western Europe and is held as a worldwide model for dramatically improved social conditions. Dublin is at the center of it all, with a high level of education and job prospects that have attracted a large immigrant population.

1910s: Religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland mean that life is very uneasy for many.

Early 1940s: Religious tensions between Irish Catholics and Protestants, particularly in Northern Ireland, mean that life is very uneasy for many.

Today: Following a cease-fire in 1998, residents in Northern Ireland observe an uneasy peace. Having belonged to divided camps for so many years, many find it hard to put aside differences and embrace the peace.

1910s: The outbreak of World War I, in which Irish men fought, helps divert attention away from a potential civil war in Ireland.

Early 1940s: While many other countries fight in World War II, Northern Ireland continues to deal with tensions at home, which often flare into militant ordeals, including terrorist bombings.

Today: Following terrorist bombings in New York and Washington, an increasing number of nations devote themselves to stopping the spread of international terrorism. Ireland does not take part in the conflict, however.

What Do I Read Next?

O'Casey's play was written in the early 1940s and examines life in the early 1910s. By contrast, John Ardagh's *Ireland and the Irish: Portrait of a Changing Society* (1994) examines how the Irish Republic has undergone a tremendous transformation in the last half of the twentieth century, from a mainly rural society to one that embraces the modern world. Although the writer addresses the conflicts in Northern Ireland, he is not limited by it and discusses a wide variety of topics□from life in the slums of Dublin to the massive success of the Irish rock band U2.

At one point in the play, O'Casey invokes images of historical Celtic heroes in an attempt to show that modern-day, oppressed Irish need to find strength in their heritage to win against their oppressors. In Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (1995), the author examines the little-known but major role that Irish monks in the Middle Ages played by transcribing and preserving many classical and religious works that were destroyed by barbarians in mainland Europe. In the process, Cahill examines the history and society of the Celts.

One of the most acclaimed Irish poets from the second half of the twentieth century is Seamus Heaney. His collection *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966—1996* (1999) offers a selection of his poetry from three decades of his career, most of which was written during the renewed conflicts that took place in Northern Ireland in the second half of the twentieth century.

Like *Red Roses for Me*, O'Casey's *The Harvest Festival* (written in 1920 but not published until 1980) features a labor conflict, during which the autobiographical protagonist is killed and becomes a martyr.

O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), arguably his most popular play, depicts the gritty daily life that many experienced in Dublin in 1916 during the time of the Easter Rising. Unlike *Red Roses for Me*, however, the combatants include British soldiers, who fight Irish rebel forces and civilians.

Critics note that *Red Roses for Me* is O'Casey's most autobiographical play. In particular, O'Casey's second volume of autobiography, *Pictures in the Hallway* (1942), seems to have influenced many of the characters in *Red Roses for Me*.

William Butler Yeats was one of O'Casey's contemporaries, and Yeats's literary efforts in the early twentieth century helped to revive Irish legends and culture. Yeats's poems are available in a variety of volumes, although *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1996) offers one of the most comprehensive anthologies available. The volume includes all of the poems that Yeats authorized for publication.

Further Study

Greaves, C. Desmond, *Sean O'Casey: Politics and Art*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1979.

O'Casey's plays are noted for their political messages. In Greaves's book, the author examines the political climate in which O'Casey grew up and how these experiences influenced O'Casey's works.

Hollis, Daniel Webster, III, *The History of Ireland*, Greenwood Press, 2001.

Hollis gives a comprehensive overview of Ireland's history, from prehistoric times to 2000. Organized chronologically, the book clearly explains the complex religious and political movements in Ireland throughout the ages. The book also includes a timeline, a list of notable persons in Irish history, and a bibliography.

Kilroy, Thomas, ed., *Sean O'Casey: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Kilroy includes a number of essays on the author, which examine a variety of themes in O'Casey's life and work.

Krause, David, *Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work*, Macmillan, 1975.

This critical biography gives an overview of O'Casey's life and work.

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Ayling, Ronald, "Sean O'Casey," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 10, *Modern British Dramatists, 1900—1945*, edited by Stanley Weintraub, Gale Research, 1982, pp. 71—90.

Benstock, Bernard, *Sean O'Casey*, Bucknell University Press, 1970, pp. 12, 18.

Malone, Maureen, "*Red Roses for Me*: Fact and Symbol," in *Modern Drama*, Vol. 9, No. 2, September 1966, pp. 147—52.

O'Casey, Sean, *Red Roses for Me*, in *The Sean O'Casey Reader: Plays, Autobiographies, Opinions*, edited by Brooks Atkinson, St. Martin's Press, 1968, pp. 365—434.

Rollins, Ronald, "Finn Again: O'Casey Resurrects Celtic Heroes in *Red Roses for Me*," in *Irish University Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 1980, pp. 52—58.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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