Rusted Legacy Study Guide

Rusted Legacy by Adrienne Rich

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Introduction

Adrienne Rich published "Rusted Legacy" in the literary journal *Sulfur* in 1997. The poem appeared two years later in her poetry collection *Midnight Salvage*, in which the poet declared she tried, at the end of the century, "to face the terrible with hope, in language as complex as necessary. . . . to write . . . for readers . . . finding their own salvaged beauty as I have found mine." The poems meditate on political ideas and events from the twentieth century and attempt to "salvage" hope from the fear, violence, and despair that have characterized that period of history. Like the other poems in the volume, and as with much of Rich's work since the 1960s, "Rusted Legacy" fuses the political and the personal. In the poem, the speaker looks back on political events and attitudes of another time and place and laments the decay of once powerful ideas and ideals, exploring the effect of those views on society and on her personally.

"Rusted Legacy" is an intense and difficult work, one that does not lend itself to straightforward interpretation. The poem's action is often perplexing, and the images used are obscure, rooted as they are in Rich's personal experiences. The piece seems to denounce political repression, comment on the withering of principles, and explore sexual roles, but this sense is derived not from any sustained statement or explanation by the poet but from the mood and scattered thoughts presented in the work. Rich has been faulted for her grim intellectualism and inaccessibility, and these characterizations may well be said to apply to "Rusted Legacy." However, for all its complexity and gloomy obscurity, the poem also bears the hallmarks of Rich's finest work, with its musicality of language and ability to elicit emotions using stark, disconcerting imagery.

Author Biography

Rich was born in 1929, in Baltimore, Maryland, to a well-to-do family. Her father was a physician, and her mother had aspirations of being a professional composer. Rich was homeschooled until the fourth grade and began to write poetry at an early age. After high school, she attended Radcliffe College, where she studied and was influenced by the work of the dominant male poets of the time: Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden. She graduated in 1951, and that year, she published *A Change of World*, her first book of poetry, which Auden selected for the Yale Younger Poets Award and praised generously. In 1953, Rich married Alfred Conrad, a Harvard economist. Over the next six years the couple had three sons. Rich's poetry during this time, for example in her 1955 collection *The Diamond Cutters and Other Poems*, continued in the male-centered tradition she learned as an undergraduate. However, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963) began to reflect her growing political involvement and interest in women's social and political roles. In 1966, Rich moved to New York and became involved in activities protesting the Vietnam War. Her political views became apparent in her work, and her poetic style began to change. She broke from the tight form and metrics of her early works and produced poetry characterized by greater improvisation. Examples of this change were seen in *Necessities of Life* (1966) and *Leaflets* (1969).

In 1970, Rich left Conrad, and later that year, he committed suicide. Her work continued to become increasingly political and her style more urgent. In 1974, Rich received the National Book Award for *Diving into the Wreck* but rejected it and instead wrote a statement accepting it in the name of all women. In 1976, Rich published *Twenty-One Love Poems* chronicling her lesbian relationship, which she has since explored in her other work. Rich's other books of poetry include *The Dream of a Common Language* (1978), *The Fact of a Doorframe* (1984), and *Time's Power* (1989). Over her career, Rich has also published widely in literary magazines. "Rusted Legacy," for example, first appeared in the journal *Sulfur* in 1997 before being collected in *Midnight Salvage, Poems 1995-1998* (1999).

In the early twenty-first century, Rich enjoys a reputation as one of the most distinguished American poets of her age. She is known for her commitment to liberal political causes as much as for her prolific literary output. In addition to more than sixteen volumes of poetry, she has published four books of nonfiction prose. Her work has been translated into German, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Hebrew, Greek, Italian, and Japanese. She has received numerous awards, including the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Lenore Marshall/Nation Prize for Poetry, the Lambda Book Award, the Poet's Prize, the MacArthur Fellowship, and, the Dorothea Tanning Prize of the Academy of American Poets. In 1997, she refused the National Medal of Arts in protest of government policies that foster social inequity. She has lived in California since l984.

Plot Summary

Overview

Readers expecting a clear message, argument, or narrative from "Rusted Legacy" will be disappointed. Like many contemporary and "postmod- ern" poems, the work pushes the limits of normal speech and communication and offers ideas that are arcane, complex, and impossible to articulate using ordinary language and linear narrative. In the poem, Rich presents a series of images that seem to be disjointed, and there is often no clear sense of how the poem hangs together. There are also what seem to be personal reflections and references that are not explained. All these elements together seem to emphasize the idea that there are, in fact, no easy responses or analyses of the situations that are referred to in the poem□or to life in general. What seems to be suggested by this style of writing is that poetry is another complex human response to events and attitudes and to distill these experiences and ideas into neat, digestible, and pithy statements gets no closer to a genuine exploration or comprehension of them. Thus, the poem makes the reader work hard, to think about what is going on, to make connections, to call up emotions, to go down a number of different avenues of thought, even to admit to being confused in order to be engaged with the poem. Even so, it seems that the reader will be left wondering about many of the references made and what the poem ultimately "means." However, that one does not "get" the poem fully does not indicate a failure on either the part of the poet or the reader. The experience of the poem itself is rewarding, and part of the strength of this particular work is its ability to elicit highly individualized responses and interpretations from readers. The following "summary" of the poem, it should be kept in mind, is also but one response to the poem, and there are other ideas lurking within it that will be summoned up by other readers, which might yield conflicting but equally legitimate interpretations of the work.

Title

The plot or action of "Rusted Legacy" is difficult to decipher, but the title gives some indication of what the poem's main theme or intention might be. A "legacy" is something (often a gift) that is transmitted from the past. This legacy or thing from the past that the poet speaks of is "rusted," indicating that it is in some state of disrepair or decay. It was presumably once strong (as suggested by the metal imagery), but the years have diminished its sturdiness and shine. Reading through the rest of the poem, it seems likely that the "legacy" the poet speaks of is an ideological one, a set of beliefs or ideals that were once vibrant and powerful but are no longer the force they once were. Various images in the text of the poem suggest that the poet is looking back at a place and time in which she (and others) held certain ideals dear. Her opponents (those in authority) did not embrace her views, but they were important to the poet and her associates. There is also a suggestion that the ideals held by those she opposed (the authority figures) have similarly decayed. Various ideas or ideals from the past, then, are now

seen by the poet to have degenerated; the legacy of that previous time is "rusted," and the poem meditates on and grieves this state of affairs.

Stanza 1

The first stanza opens by asking the reader to "Imagine a city." The reader is thus brought in immediately as an active participant in the poem. It is not clear from the first line whether the city the poet speaks of is a real city or imaginary city. The poet then describes what seem to be very personal experiences from life in that city. Still addressing the reader, she says that in that city nothing a person does is forgiven, and one's past deeds stay with a person like a scar or tattoo. But, strangely and paradoxically, while deeds are not forgiven, they are forgotten. The sense conveyed is that the reader has an intensely personal connection to the city and that the city is some sort of authority figure over her, a parent-figure perhaps.

The images used in the stanza are strange and suggest a number of possibilities. The poet says that almost everything is forgotten but then proceeds to list a series of memorable events. There is a deer flattened after it leapt across the highway looking for food. This seems to be an image that suggests wide-eyed innocence and a sudden, violent death that was unexpected in the course of doing something as basic as looking for sustenance. The poet then refers to "the precise reason for the shaving of the confused girl's head." This might be a reference to the shaving of young women's heads in France during World War II as a sign or "brand" (echoing the references to "scar" and "tattoo" earlier in the poem) that they were "collaborators" who had relationships with German officers. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the shaved head of a woman often symbolized the fact that such branding of women did not recognize the complexity of female political and social roles in society. Thus, a shaved head for a woman is a sign of political protest, and perhaps here, the poet suggests a young woman (herself?) who is serious about her political beliefs but also confused about them in some way. The image that follows of the young boys pushing frogs is another violent image, but one that is strangely universal. All young boys, it seems, kill things for pleasure in this way. This of course makes the violent act no less disturbing.

The poet returns to talking about the city. It is a city that does not remember but yet is intent on retributions, or vengeance, for what has been done. What is the city intent on retributions for? Perhaps the political ideologies that it did not agree with, the defiance of authority on the part of those whose deeds adhere to them like scars? The poet again asks the reader to imagine the city, this time its physical appearance (its architecture) and political organization (its governance), including the men and women in power. Then, after asking the reader to imagine this city and presenting what seem to be references that are personal to *her*, the poet talks to the reader as though the reader has been a part of that city: "tell me if it is not true you still / live in that city." The poet and the reader seem to have merged into one person. The poet is remembering a city or place (or a state of mind) whose ideology was contrary to hers. It is a city that is at once imaginary and also a place or a state of mind that the poet has never left.

Stanza 2

The city the poet asks the reader to imagine in the second stanza seems to be the same city but it has very different characteristics. The imagery in this stanza is, among other things, religious. The poet asks the reader to imagine a city that is partitioned. This could be a city anywhere□in the Middle East (Jerusalem), where Israelis and Palestinians are forced to live in separate settlements, or in the United States, where many cities are divided so distinctly between sections where rich and poor reside. The city is described too in surreal terms. Temples (religious gathering places) and telescopes (suggesting that there is no privacy, that the residents are being observed constantly), the poet says, "used to probe the stormy codices." Again, the latter is a religious image (a codex is a religious or spiritual law; "codices" is the plural form of the noun). It is not clear whether "used" indicates the past tense or whether the temples and telescopes *are* used to probe the stormy codices. Then too, the idea of "stormy codices" is puzzling.

The city is "blind" in some sense, as it is "brailling through fog"; the use of the noun "braille" (the script used by blind readers) as a verb together with "fog" offers another strange picture. The city, it seems, is a place of confusion and political repression (suggested by the "twisted wire" so common in prisoner-of-war camps). It is dark but there is something sensuous and inviting (its "velvet dialectic") about it, perhaps in a false way. The city is corrupted, its rivers the same as its sewers. There is a great deal of water imagery in this stanza. The poet talks about art's "unchartered aquifers," indicating perhaps that the city has neglected this aspect of civil life. The source or "springhead" of the water is in municipal gardens that are left unlocked at night. All this water imagery, much of it mysterious, seems to indicate a city that is deluged and out of control. Water is normally cleansing and rejuvenating, but this water is not. The water might also indicate tears.

The second half of the stanza shifts in tone, and suddenly the poet seems to be transported to a very particular time and place. She is "under the pines" (apparently in one of the city's unlocked municipal parks) at night while "arrests" are going on. She is fingering glass beads that she has strung. The beads (and arrests) might be an indication that this is the 1960s (when many young people wore beads), and the poet is at some type of protest or demonstration. That she is fingering beads (like a rosary) also reinforces the religious overtones of the stanza. She says she was transfixed from head to groin (which is unusual because this means her legs can move), and she wanted to save what she could□but there is no indication of what this might be. Then she says that "they" (with little clue as to who "they" are) brought little glasses of water into the dark park. They did this before they "gutted" the villages. Perhaps "they" are the authorities (police), who after their somewhat human gesture of bringing water for the demonstrators proceeded to destroy and do violence in response to the demonstrations. Then the poet ends the stanza by saying that "they" too were trying to save what they could. Maybe what she is suggesting here is that both the protestors and the authorities were acting according to their beliefs, each group doing what they had to do. The stanza ends echoing the last line of the first stanza, asking the reader if this is not

the same city. Once again, it seems that the poet is looking back at the past but recognizes that in some ways things have not changed very much at all.

Stanza 3

The poet now moves to speaking entirely in the first person, and it is clear that the city is a place she knows intimately. She says she has forced herself to come back to this place like a daughter who must put her mother's house in order□presumably because her "mother," the city, is old and diseased or dead. So then perhaps the "rusted legacy" that the title refers to is the legacy of the city, which is now decayed and no longer what it used to be. It is up to the daughter to clean up the ruins left of her family history. The poet says she returns to her mother's house, where she needs gloves to handle the medicinals (that kept the mother going even though she was ill) and disease that pervade the house. She wonders if she is up to the task. She is an "accomplished criminal," she says but does not know if she can accomplish justice here. This seems to imply that her criminal activity is not really criminal but politically subversive. Perhaps she is an activist who has moved on to other things and issues and now returns to the place of her past. It could be her past "deeds" were ineffectual but not "forgiven," and now it is time to make positive changes to the city. The poet says she does not know whether she can do it, whether she can tear "the old wedding sheets" (family heirlooms, intimate treasures of one's past) and "clean" the place as she needs to. There is a strong suggestion in this stanza that the poet is a person of certain political convictions who returns to the place of her youth, a place that she both loves and despises. The city she lived in has decayed, but the change she fought for has never made an impact on the city. She has come back to do something positive for the city, but she is not sure that she can do it.

There is water imagery in this stanza as well. The poet describes herself as stone with water pleating across her. Again, the water here might be tears. The idea of stone pleating across water also implies change that is extremely gradual (water eventually erodes and wears away stone). The poet seems to lament the fact that she is so unmoved by returning to the city and her mother; she is a faithless daughter "like stone." But she has water pleating across her, implying that perhaps she can do something positive and make the changes that will make some difference to the city. Again, the stanza ends with the refrain echoed from the first stanza, as the poet asks if this is the same city. The city is the same, but in many ways it seems very different since it is in such a state of decay.

Stanza 4

In the final stanza, the poet at first refers to herself in the first person but then makes references in the third person, using "she" and "her." In the course of the poem, the poet has gone from being a shadowy presence who speaks to the reader, who then merges with the reader, who takes on a distinct personal past and becomes an "I," and now seems to look at herself in a distanced and disengaged manner. She asks if this "I"

must lie scabbed with rust. The title of the poem comes to mind, and it now appears that the poet herself embodies the "rusted legacy" referred to. Perhaps what she is saying is that her political ideology and deeds that once seemed so important are decayed and seem ineffectual. Thus she is like the city; she had strong beliefs that have degenerated, and in a sense, she too has decayed. The poet is crammed with memories of this place, this city where, again, most things are forgotten. There is no one left in this city, she says, to "go around gathering the full dissident story." It sounds like she is the only one (of those who were arrested, or in the park, perhaps?) of her associates who has returned to the city and can tell the truth about what has happened in the past. Perhaps all her youthful associates have left the city (and the political causes) they held so dear when they were young, and she is the only one who still is fighting for justice. The poet says her hands and shoulders are rusting, her lips stone (indicating she is silenced in some way). Again there seems to be some hope for change as there are tears "leaching down" from her eyesockets (a disturbing image that seems to imply the tears are coming from deep within her). The water in her tears again might be the force of change, the power that slowly reshapes the stone of herself and the city into something of hope and renewal. She asks if her tears are for "one self" (herself) only. No, she concludes, her eyesockets, her tears are for the whole city. Each "encysts" it; each forms a sort of membrane or pouch around the city. This is, again, a disturbing and graphic image, but the idea seems to be that even from horror, violence, bitterness, regret, and mourning of a troubled past can there spring possibilities for positive change.

Themes

The Personal and the Political

"Rusted Legacy" is a work with political themes, but those themes are suggested not by any sustained action or statements in the poem but by different images scattered throughout the four stanzas. The images presented for the most part are intimate, implying the close connection between personal attitudes and events and political ideas. The poet invites the reader from the beginning to "Imagine a city," and this city is not an abstract, ideal city (like the philosopher Plato's city in *The Republic* or the theologian St. Augustine's city in *The City of God*) but what seems to be a very real, recognizable place with deer being killed on highways, where there are sewers and parks, and where there is architecture, governance, and people in power. The intimate connection between the poet and the city, the personal and the political, is emphasized by the poet as she thinks of the city as a mother to whom she returns when the former is dying.

Other images reinforce the link between the personal and the political. The image of the "confused girl" seems to suggest the idea of political statements made by women who shave their heads to point out that the complexity of women's political and social roles in society are most often not fully appreciated. But it is significant that it is a very particular girl (perhaps herself) that the poet refers to; she is not merely a symbol but a very real□but "forgotten"□girl who is part of the city. The poet refers to herself specifically beginning in the second stanza, explaining that she has a past in the city. This point becomes even clearer in the third stanza as she says she has forced herself to come back to the city to put her mother's house "in order." The poet uses another intimate image in the third stanza when she wonders if she can tear the old "wedding sheets" and use them as cleaning rags to put her mother's house in order.

The sense conveyed in much of the poem is that the "rusted legacy" the poet is talking about is an ideological legacy, ideas from the past that have somehow become corrupted and are in a state of decay. At the end of the poem, the poet herself becomes these political ideas, as she is the one who is "scabbed with rust." That is, within her, the personal and the political are completely fused. Like the other themes and ideas in the poem, to try to spell out exactly what Rich "means" when she suggests that the personal and political are intertwined is a difficult task. Perhaps she is calling to her reader's attention, among other things, that politics pervade life at every level, that personal actions determine what happens in the world, and that emotional responses can provide hope for positive change even in a repressive and troubled political environment.

The Corruption of Political Ideals

The image of the city in "Rusted Legacy" offers a physical image of a place where the ideas of the past are in a state of decay. At first (in the first stanza), the city seems to be

the same city it always was; it has the same architecture and governance that it had in the past, the same men and women in power. By the second stanza, it seems that the city was always in some state of degeneration and corruption, for example, its sewers are the same as its rivers. In the third stanza, there is the stark image of the city as an old woman who is sick and has been kept alive through the use of "medicinals." The city in one way does not seem to have changed from the past to the present day, but in another way, it is a very different place now than it once was. There seems to be a suggestion that political ideas, positions, or outlooks in one sense stay the same but in another they change a great deal over the course of time. That is, the vibrancy of those ideas becomes old and dull as time passes.

The poem seems to suggest that political ideals of different kinds have corrupted over time. The city, which perhaps embodies the status quo or dominant ideology of American government (with its mainstream values of liberal democracy and suspicion of "leftist" or radical politics), was once powerful and strong but now it is like an old woman who relies on medicines to keep her alive. The political ideals of the poet/speaker seem also to have decayed over time. The poet says that she too is scabbed with rust, so presumably her political views have also degenerated. It could be that she once tried to accomplish justice in the city by her "dissent" but that was not successful. She returns to the city years later to find that the city has decayed but so too have her own ideals, or at least that they are no longer put into practice. Her lips are stone, which indicates she no longer professes (publicly) her ideals or does what needs to be done to effect change. However, although the poet laments the fact that political ideas and ideals are in a state of decay, she holds out hope for change. The tears that come from within her (a deeply personal and emotional response to the world) seem to be a likely force with which to create change, to "put her mother's house in order," to better the city, and to make the world a better a place.

Style

Style

"Rusted Legacy" is a perplexing poem, one that uses difficult language and concepts, unusual images, and disjointed sequences of actions. It seems to move from present to past and back again but without any clear indication that this is what is happening. It is told from the point of view of a speaker/poet who addresses the reader, who provides intimate details about her own experiences, and who sometimes implies that the experiences she describes as her own are the reader's. Such basic aspects of the poem as time and point of view are not clearly delineated, and much is required of the reader to try to decipher who the poet might be, what her history is, what events she is describing, and in general what she might be trying to communicate. The overall effect of the disjointed style is one of disorder and complexity. This effect underscores the political and personal confusion in the poem, as it describes a city that forgets deeds it has not forgiven, as it explores the poet's own emotions of confusion and guilt at being a "faithless daughter."

The structure of the poem is not uniform, which again suggests disorder. The first stanza is eleven lines long, the second sixteen lines, the third ten lines, and the fourth seven lines. The poem is written in blank verse. The rhythm varies from stanza to stanza and indeed from section to section of the poem; there is no regular beat that ties it together. The only unifying element of the poem comes at the end of the first three stanzas when the poet asks the reader to "tell me" about the city and in the fourth when she says her eyesockets "encysts" the city. The repetition and focus on the nature of the city at the end of each stanza provides a loose structure to the poem, and the cryptic refrain further adds a sense of mystery and darkness to the work.

Imagery

The mood of the poem is suggested by the various disturbing and startling images that are scattered throughout. Some of the images, like that of the deer flattened on the highway, seem to have definite implications (the deer might symbolize wide-eyed innocence), but others seem to be highly personal references. The "trays with little glasses of water" the poet refers to in the second stanza, for example, seems to be something from her personal past. Some of the images recur in the poem in different forms. For example, there is a great deal of water imagery, beginning with the sewers, river, aquifers, and glasses of water in the second stanza to the water pleating across stone in the third stanza, to the poet's tears in the fourth stanza. How these images are tied together is not entirely clear, but the water at the end of the poem does seem to suggest hope for renewal and change. By using water imagery early on in the poem, the poet might be referring to possibilities for change that were not allowed to flourish or that were thwarted somehow. Again, much of the imagery in the poem is cryptic, and it

is left as a challenge to the reader to read deeply and to explore possibilities of what individual references might be pointing to.

Historical Context

Rich published "Rusted Legacy" in 1997, as the century was drawing to a close. The poem is political, and although it is difficult to pinpoint particular events in the work, it clearly comments on the political legacy of the second half of the twentieth century. This is a common theme in almost all of Rich's work from the 1960s on, as the poet explores her frustrations with the status quo and the injustice she perceives in society. Indeed, Rich expresses her anger at social injustice not only in her work but also by being a vocal advocate for political change on a number of fronts, fighting for gay rights, women's rights, and economic justice. In 1997, the same year that "Rusted Legacy" was published, Rich made headlines when she refused the National Medal for the Arts, which is awarded by the White House. In a letter published by the *New York Times*, Rich wrote "I cannot accept such an award from President Clinton or this White House because the very meaning of art, as I understand it, is incompatible with the cynical politics of this administration." She further commented that she could not be celebrated by a political system that allowed such disparities between rich and poor in American society.

"Rusted Legacy" is a poem written very much in the spirit of Rich's anger at the corrupt politics of the United States at the end of the twentieth century. The poem laments the degeneration of once powerful political principles as the poet looks back and is saddened that the activism of earlier times did not elicit any lasting change. Although Rich's poem makes no specific reference to this situation, it is interesting that President Bill Clinton has been seen by many of his critics to have been a figure who once held lofty political ideals (he was known for his extremely liberal position in the 1960s and his objection to the Vietnam War) but who abandoned those notions for practical political gain□essentially so that he could have a career in mainstream politics. While Rich does not make the connection in her poem, it is ironic and significant that her public political objection to the Clinton administration in 1997 is echoed in her poem, written the same year, that mourns the decay of political ideals.

Critical Overview

Since the publication of her first book of poems in 1951, Rich has been a dominating presence in American literary circles. She is one of the most popular and influential poets of the early-twentyfirst century, publishing widely and prolifically and traveling to give talks and read from her work. Each new collection she publishes is thus a literary event, and this was certainly the case with her volume *Midnight Salvage*, in which "Rusted Legacy" appeared in 1999. Although the poem had been published two years earlier in the journal *Sulfur*, it was not reviewed individually after its appearance there. Even in the voluminous reviews of *Midnight Salvage*, the poem has not received any individual critical attention. Other poems in the collection, such as "The Art of Translation" and "Midnight Salvage," have been singled out by critics as being particularly noteworthy for their daring imagery and nuanced language, but "Rusted Legacy" has not been mentioned except in passing with other poems as being one of Rich's many reflections in the volume on political repression. This might not be an indication of lack of interest in the work so much as a consequence of the difficulty of summarizing and characterizing the poem in analytic terms. Interestingly, as a collection, *Midnight Salvage* has been praised by the vast number of writers who have reviewed it, but most examinations of the work have been brief and not particularly informative. Ann K. Van Buren writing in the *Library Journal*, for example, commented that the work is "liberating in content and in form," and Janet Montefiore in the *Times Literary Supplement* called the poems "wide-ranging, untidy, and intimate." Again, the reason for the scarcity of commentary may well be the difficult and cryptic nature of the poems themselves, which do not lend themselves to straightforward interpretation or easy analysis, but which have a mysterious appeal because of the intensity of language and imagery used.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Kukathas is a freelance editor and writer. In this essay, Kukathas considers whether "Rusted Legacy" fails as a political poem because of its use of private rather than public language, images, and ideas.

Like most of Rich's poetry, "Rusted Legacy" is a pointedly political work. Also, as is the case with a great deal of Rich's work, it is impossible to present in the form of a coherent analysis or statement exactly what the poem "means." The language the poet uses is difficult, her images are unusual and sometimes perplexing, and the ideas explored in the poem are hard to decipher. Indeed, paradoxically, that this undoubtedly political poem *is* political is not immediately obvious because the piece offers no overt message or ideological position of any distinct sort. Rather, actions, images, and ideas are presented and explored that have political overtones. The political nature of the poem, it might be said, is apparent while the political view being discussed in it (if there is one) is not clear at all. This is certainly unusual, as one would perhaps think that the *purpose* of a political poem is to make plain to readers a particular viewpoint that the poet holds up as more reasonable and reflective of the way the world is (or should be) than competing theories. Or at least one would expect it to explore the strengths and weaknesses of competing political doctrines. Further, it would seem that a political poem would be a public statement of some sort, written in a language that is far-reaching and accessible, that would have some universal resonance to emphasize that political and social concerns are common to all human beings. But "Rusted Legacy" meets none of these expectations. It seems to take pains to be obscure, offers no clear political point of view and is written in an intensely private style using images and ideas that appear to be part of the poet's very individualized experiences that are certainly not easily recognizable in all people at all times.

How, then, is the poem political? As noted earlier, Rich makes a number of allusions throughout the piece to political ideas and images. It seems that one of the things going on in the poem is that the poet is reflecting on her past and the thinking about the political environment in which she grew up. She opens by asking readers to "[i]magine a city" with a certain type of governance, where there are "men and . . . women in power." This seems to be the city of the poet's past but is also very much present in her life right now. The poet seems to be remembering incidents from her past that have taken place in the city, including her being present when people are being arrested and "villages gutted." She says she returns to the city to "accomplish justice" and is the only one left to "gather . . . the full dissident story." But these political allusions don't hang together very well to tell a coherent story. They seem to suggest that the poet has had certain experiences in the past that were politically significant to her, but why those experiences or events should be important to anyone else is not clear at all.

The main reason it is not clear why those experiences should be important (politically or otherwise) to others is they are provided in a context that is not public but private. Instead of situating her political experience in a larger, more recognizable context, Rich focuses on specific, private incidents that define those experiences for her. In the first

stanza, the poet talks about the city as though she knows it intimately (she speaks with a certain amount of familiarity and bitterness when she explains that the city forgets but does not forgive, that it is intent on retributions) and offers a series of three images. The first image, of a deer being flattened on a highway, is bizarre but recognizable and thus "public" in some way. It seems to suggest innocence and naiveté, perhaps of a political sort. The second image is of a "confused girl" having her head shaved. This image could, again, be political if one thinks of women with shaved heads as representing the unappreciated complexity of women's social-political roles. But that this is what this "confused girl" stands for is not that obvious. It is also not clear whether the girl might be the poet herself. The image does not seem to be sufficiently public because what it is supposed to represent is (at least for most readers) so hard to unravel. The third image, of boys punishing frogs, is again universal and thus public, but it is hard to say how the image fits in with the other two and with the stanza as a whole. The images in the second stanza are even more obscure. The poet is, on the one hand, at a very particular place ("under the pines") but there is no clue provided as to where this might be. There are arrests going on, but what are the arrests for? Who is the "they" being referred to? Why do they bring "little glasses of water"? What were the poet and "they" trying to "save"?

These unexplained images and ideas work (or don't work) together to present a confusing picture. The experiences described or alluded to are important to the poet, but in what way? They seem to tell the reader nothing about her political beliefs or point of view. Instead of making the political situation or governance or power structure she is talking about more recognizable to readers, they make it less so. The events related seem not to be offered to prompt in the reader certain shared ideas or feelings or to communicate commonly understood or appreciated human experiences. They seem, in essence, to be too completely private and personal to be fitting for a public, political poem. The political allusions do not present an accessible, public message that strikes the reader as being "universal" in an important way.

All these features of "Rusted Legacy" would suggest that it does indeed fail as a political poem. But does it? There is good case for saying that it does not. It might be that the expectations and characteristics of a political poem offered earlier might simply be too stringent and conservative, and it could be that Rich is simply offering a political poem of a different, maybe radical, sort. Rich could be suggesting in both form and content of her work that a political poem does not have to be "public" or to have an overt message. In fact, she could be suggesting that politics is much more complex than can be expressed in statements of ideological or doctrinal principles; it is an integral part of human experience that loses its richness, complexity, and power when reduced to slogans and statements of beliefs. One of Rich's intentions in the poem seems to be to point out how the political and the personal are connected. The most striking, and certainly the most "universal," "public," and recognizable image she uses is that of the city as the mother to which she returns as a "faithless daughter" after some years of absence. There is a sense that the political past the poet is reflecting on is significant to her not because of the ideologies involved but for a much more personal reason. Deep feelings are generated (tears leach down from her eyesockets) when the poet remembers the past, and it seems that an emotional rather than a rational response is

what is required if the poet is to "accomplish justice," effect political change, and "put her mother's house in order."

"Rusted Legacy" is certainly a difficult and confusing work. But its difficulty and obscurity are not necessary failings but rather might be seen as carefully chosen devices used to communicate a deeper message about politics. Rich presents a series of disjointed images that are obviously rooted in some personal experiences she has had. She remembers the political past not in terms of particular ideologies, slogans, positions, or statements of beliefs. Rather it is a part of her emotional life. The political, she seems to be saying, is not so much about public views as it is about people's personal commitments and relationships, about how they see the world not as public beings but as members of a greater human family who love and disappoint and hurt each other. Politics is bound up in everyday life, and to try to offer some statement about how the world is or should be governed does not do justice to how deeply politics is a part of human experience.

"Rusted Legacy" does not fail as a political poem because the political is not necessarily only (or primarily) something public but something deeply private. That Rich uses the image of a mother and daughter is especially significant because she seems to be saying that the political is intensely private, intimate, and bound up with one's particular, often incommunicable experiences. These experiences are even more recognizably "universal" than more public ones because they form the greater part of human existence and are central to human emotional and mental life. The other obscure images Rich uses in the poem might not be familiar to readers, but they are part of the poet's political past in a way that is meaningful to her. The poem explores a public subject in a most private way□using private language, images, and ideas□because politics is meaningful only insofar as it is connected with real, intimate, human experiences that sometimes cannot be communicated or understood but are for that reason no less "universal."

Source: Uma Kukathas, Critical Essay on "Rusted Legacy," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

Hill is the author of a poetry collection, has published widely in literary journals, and is an editor for a university publications department. In the following essay, Hill contends that Rich saves her poem from the fate of many of her politically didactic works by using lush imagery and language that is more poetic than preachy.

When Adrienne Rich is able to refrain from manbashing and obsessing on male violence against women, when she can put aside overt political propagandizing and social injustice tirades, and when she steps back from using her lesbianism as an inyour- face tool for provoking the status quo, her poetry is all the better for it. In spite of the fact that Rich's fame, or infamy, is founded on her tendency to dwell on these very subjects, no scholar or general reader can deny that she has produced some of the most arresting imagery and unique poetic visions of anyone writing in the contemporary United States. One of her more recent poems, "Rusted Legacy," is evidence of it. This poem proves that what one does simply with *language* can make a remarkable difference in determining what is just rhetorical fodder and what is truly a message worth receiving.

The concern for *place* is a major component of Rich's poetry, and often it turns out that the place in question is the speaker's own body. While there may be nothing inherently misleading about this premise in verse, Rich frequently lingers on the intimate, personal self to the point of overkill. She has long been noted for insisting that the personal is inevitably political, and these two elements serve as vital inspiration for her. As a result, they tend to fuel each other throughout much of her work. In *Modern American Women Writers*, critic Harriet Davidson suggests that "Rich's emphasis on 'location' keeps her tied to the material world and away from the temptations of philosophical idealism and transcendence that tend to obscure the material conditions of different people's lives." This may be partially true, but the poet is no stranger to philosophizing in verse and using her publications as political platforms. Davidson addresses Rich's common use of the physical being as a "location" in saying that "The body's world is in history, in places, in discourses, a world we cannot escape or control." This theory is probably on the mark as far as understanding Rich's penchant for linking personal life to politics and, therefore, to history and society in general. But in "Rusted Legacy" the reader, for the most part, is spared too much intimate exposure and too much ideological ranting in favor of provocative imagery and objective accounting. Certainly, place is central to the poem's context, but, here, the location is not the speaker's body, but a city. That alone helps make the poem more palatable than many of Rich's goading, didactic works.

Likely since the first poet put pen□or quill□ to paper, verse writers have endured the precarious burden of assuring their art's credibility, especially in the face of so many who would cast it off as mere fluff or sentimental poppycock. While history has shown that the naysayers have at times been justified in their skepticism, it has also shown that *good* poetry has served the populace well in explaining the unexplainable, reaching depths of the mind and soul that may otherwise have remained untouched, and in stirring the intellect to new levels of thought and deliberation. In essence, poetry has

been and still is a valuable component of human culture. But what must be maintained to assure its credibility is uniqueness and compelling presentation. The metaphors and the specific details of "Rusted Legacy" make it worth reading. They are related by an objective speaker□Rich herself□describing what is *outside* her own mind and body. The "city" she chronicles is harsh and unforgiving, and it pays no mind to its victims□ the "deer flattened leaping a highway for food," the "confused girl's head" that was shaved, apparently in a mental institution, and "the frogs" bearing whatever cruelty "small boys" can weigh upon them. These are things most people are familiar with, and yet they probably do not come to mind until someone points them out. Rich's message is critical: it is easy to forget the suffering of the innocent when they are overshadowed by the mindless machine of "governance" and "the men and the women in power."

The poem becomes even stronger metaphorically in the second stanza. Regardless of what city or cities are referred to, one knows for sure that these are towns with troubled histories, towns that the poet lived in or visited long enough to witness social unrest among the citizens and a frequently severe response from the government. Rich is eloquent in her depiction of an evidently dismal scene□the city is "divorced from its hills," and "temples and telescopes" have played a role in breaking down the codes of would-be revolutionaries and dissidents. Perhaps the city in the second stanza is Rome, which Rich visited as a young woman. But this idea is downplayed as though to emphasize that the specific place is not as important as understanding the condition of urban life generally and symbolically. The word "brailling" adds a wonderful touch to keep the idea of codes and underground operations and government probes alive. Since it is spelled with two *l*'s, one must assume the word is simply the verb form of Braille, a type of code used by the blind. But the phrase "a city brailling through fog" reminds one of the word "brail" (spelled with one *l*), a nautical term for the nets that one uses to haul in fish. This definition still cleverly perpetuates notions of dissident behavior and how those involved often become trapped in the nets of government crackdowns and investigations. Rich enhances the image with "thicket and twisted wire," again implying a world of secret networks and a web of revolutionary activity.

All of that metaphorical bounty is contained in only the first four lines of the second stanza of "Rusted Legacy." There is much more. As a selfprofessed follower of Karl Marx (the nineteenthcentury German economist and political philosopher), Rich often explores the Marxist theory of dialectics□the endeavor to reach a solution to a problem by pitting opposing forces against each other in a series of questions, arguments, and answers. For Marx, and perhaps for Rich, the ultimate use of dialectics is in the concept of class struggle, in which the fight would lead to less distinction among citizens in society and to a communist economy. But in "Rusted Legacy," "night's velvet dialectic" is a strikingly poetic way of describing how sewers can be rivers and rivers "art's unchartered aquifers" whose springhead opens into yet another possible metaphor, a fountain in a public garden. Water is an important symbol in this poem, both for its role as a source or a beginning and as a substance that can cause other materials to break down, an idea implied later in the poem. Here, Rich uses it as a transport, so to speak, to move the poem from a present city she asks the reader to imagine back to a city she recalls being in "while the arrests were going on." The sewer waters of underground activity give way, metaphorically, to the garden fountains, which, in turn, lead Rich's

memory to the "trays with little glasses of cold water" offered to the revolutionaries before they were detained by police or military personnel. As usual, Rich's point is political: governments are oppressive, and even helpless little villages are not safe from the big, trampling boots of capitalists. The poem is saved from overt political philosophizing simply by its admirable poetics. Rich makes nice use of the water metaphor, allowing it to guide both herself and the reader on a journey from the present to a historically significant moment (at least, in the poet's mind) and back to the present: "tell me if this is not the same city."

True to her contention that the personal is political and that poetry is a vehicle for exploring the two together, Rich moves "Rusted Legacy" into the intimate arena of her own life before closing. While the third stanza concentrates on mother-daughter allusions, incorporating both the personal ("I have forced myself to come back like a daughter / required to put her mother's house in order") and the political ("Accomplished criminal I've been but / can I accomplish justice here?"), it also continues the water metaphor. Likely, it also explains the title of the poem. It is no secret that Rich's relationship with her parents was strained, at best, and, therefore, it is no surprise that she describes herself as "Faithless daughter / like stone." But water, in the form of tears this time, is also present, and the idea that enough water can erode stone, taking advantage of its porous nature and exposing its vulnerability. Apparently, even a hard-hearted daughter has her weaknesses. Water does something else too. It aids the growth of rust, and even the toughest, hardest of metals is susceptible to it. By portraying herself as "scabbed with rust," the poet exposes her own vulnerability through metaphor perhaps softening the recognition of a dubious legacy.

It is unfortunate that some poets go beyond points where they should have ended. That is, they take a poem past its effective stopping point to belabor what does not need to be belabored. Rich does this with "Rusted Legacy," a poem that is otherwise provocative and intellectually stimulating. In the last stanza, after describing herself as "scabbed with rust," she falters into self-pity and sentimentality. There is a weak attempt to make another political statement in descrying the fact that there is "no one left / to go around gathering the full dissident story" (presumably, her own), but it carries little weight on which to end the poem. Probably the last two lines of "Rusted Legacy" actually reveal what is wrong with most of the last stanza: the tears are "for one self only." Although the final statement, "each encysts a city," may try to reconnect the personal to the political or social, it rings too much of pathos and is too overworked to be persuasive. Even the seldom used verb "encysts" is an obvious attempt at drama, but one without payoff.

Luckily for this poem, its *good* parts are lengthy enough to withstand a brief bad stanza. And those good parts are made so by the strong imagery they contain and the intriguing presentation of language. One who is familiar enough with Rich's work understands why it has been both loved and hated by critics and the reading public. When her poetry exists solely as a platform to convey a fervent political or social statement, the language is generally hateful and flat, as well as inflammatory. For this reason, some people consider Rich more an activist or feminist than a poet. But when her work conveys her messages albeit controversial and militant with attractive metaphors and powerful

visual details, it demonstrates that she is indeed a *poet* in the best sense of the word. Asked by critic Rachel Spence about the current direction of her poetry, in an interview included in Rich's *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*, Rich said, "I have thought recently that my poetry exposes the scarring of the human psyche under the conditions of a runaway, racist capitalism. But that's because my psyche is also scarred by these conditions." This analysis of her own poetry may get at the root of why she has turned out numerous questionable works in the field of poetry. But "Rusted Legacy" is one of Rich's good poems, and it need not be diminished by any that came before or after it.

Source: Pamela Steed Hill, Critical Essay on "Rusted Legacy," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Adaptations

The Academy of American Poets maintains a Rich web page at http://www.poets.org/poets/ with links to other interesting sites.

The audiobook *Adrienne Rich (Voice of the Poet)* (2002) features Rich reading from and talking about her work.

Topics for Further Study

Research the work of other contemporary poets who write about politics. How do their approaches and styles compare to or differ from Rich's?

Explore the phenomenon of the "Baby Boomer" generation, which was very involved in radical politics in the 1960s but has now moved away from political concerns and has embraced a more consumer-oriented social attitude. In what ways, if any, does this phenomenon connect to Rich's poem?

Compare Rich's "city" in "Rusted Legacy" to other imaginary political cities that have been described in the Western tradition, for example the cities in Plato's *Republic* and Thomas More's *Utopia*. Are there any similarities in the descriptions of these political cities?

The "city" Rich describes might be a figurative and not a literal one. If it is figurative, what might it represent?

What Do I Read Next?

Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations (2001) features essays by Rich written from the 1970s through the 1990s and shows how her thinking about poetry and politics has changed over time.

Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America (1999) by the philosopher Richard Rorty discusses the shameful incidents of the United States' political past and urges that what is needed is a reform movement that can work positively to turn the country into a better nation.

Rich's collection *Fox: Poems 1998-2000* (2001) contains more work that focuses on politics and shows her frustration with the injustice in society.

What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics (1994) contains journals, letters, dreams, memories, and poems by Rich that reflect on how poetry and politics enter and influence American life.

Further Study

Cooper, Jane Roberta, *Reading Adrienne Rich: Review and Re-Visions, 1951-81*, The University of Michigan Press, 1984.

This book presents a collection of interpretive and critical essays and reviews on Rich's poetry and prose.

Gelpi, Barbara Charlesworth, and Albert Gelpi, eds., *Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, W. W. Norton and Company, 1975.

This book contains a selection of Rich's early poetry and prose along with critical commentaries.

Keyes, Claire, *The Aesthetics of Power: The Poetry of Adrienne Rich*, The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Keyes offers a critical examination of Rich's work from 1951 to the mid-1980s that builds on the feminist criticism of the 1960s.

Yorke, Liz, *Adrienne Rich: Passion, Politics and the Body*, Sage Publications, 1997.

Yorke introduces readers to Rich's work by focusing on the poet's political prose and demonstrating the complexity of Rich's contribution to feminism.

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Montefiore, Janet, Review of *Midnight Salvage*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, No. 5094, November 17, 2000.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) 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, PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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

PfS 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 Poetry 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 PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS 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 Poetry for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry 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 PfS, 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 Poetry 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 PfS, 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 Poetry 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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