Saved Study Guide

Saved by Edward Bond

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Introduction

Saved was first presented on November 3, 1965, at the Royal Court Theatre, London, as a private club production of the English Stage Society. The "club" designation was necessary because the Lord Chamberlain, the head of the Queen's household and the official censor of British theatre, had demanded such substantial alterations to the text before granting a license for performance that the Royal Court had decided to dodge the law in order to present the play as written and without a license. It had long been held that the Lord Chamberlain did not have authority over "private" club productions.

The production caused an uproar. On opening night there were shouts of outrage from the audience and physical violence in the foyers during the intermission and after the show. *Saved* explores the dehumanizing industrial environment and the moral emptiness of the working-class world of South London and the beastliness and brutality that are the result. The scene that most shocked the audience and to which the Lord Chamberlain had objected with no room for compromise involved the murder of a bastard baby in its pram by a group of young working-class louts, including its father. Most of the critics, with such prominent exceptions as Martin Esslin, Penelope Gilliatt, and Alan Brien, "slaughtered" the play. Aroused patrons formed "representative" organizations to fight such "obscene," "sadistic," "filthy," and "unfunny" drama. Leaders of the Royal Court were arrested on a technicality of the law (police officers, who were members of the English Stage Company, were not required to show their cards when entering the theatre) and there was a court case.

Although the Lord Chamberlain made it clear that he did not intend to challenge the right of private clubs to present plays that had not been approved by his office, the Magistrate's decision stated clearly that the Lord Chamberlain did in fact have jurisdiction over such productions. That closed the door on what had always been seen as an outlet for *avant garde* theatre to be performed free of censorship. The *Saved* case was thus directly instrumental in ending pre-production censorship in England, which officially occurred on September 28, 1968. (*Early Morning*, Bond's next play, was the last play to be banned *in toto* by the Lord Chamberlain.) One of the first results of the demise of the censor was a short repertory season of Bond plays at the Royal Court *Saved, Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and *Early Morning*. The abolition of the censor by the Theatres Act of 1968 allowed the whole of theatre to deal seriously with contemporary reality in an adult manner.

Author Biography

Edward Bond was born in 1934 into a working-class family in Holloway, North London. In 1940 he was evacuated to Cornwall and subsequently to his grandparents in Ely, Cambridgeshire. In 1944 he returned to London and attended Crouch End Secondary Modern School, where he was not thought good enough to take the eleven-plus exam, which was necessary in order for him to continue school. He therefore left school at age fifteen, ending his formal education. However, while still in school, he went to see Donald Wolfit' s production *of Macbeth*, which had a profound impact on him. He later said in an interview, quoted in *Bond: A Study of His Works*: "for the very first time ... I met somebody who was actually talking about my problems, the life I'd been living, the political society around me ... I knew all those people, they were in the street or in the newspapers this (Macbeth) in fact was my world." He also attended the music hall regularly (his sister was a magician's assistant), which taught him theatrical builds and timing.

In 1953 Bond began his two years National Service and while in the army began his first serious writing. In 1958 he submitted two plays to the newly-formed English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and both were rejected. However, he was invited to join the Writers Group at the Royal Court, under the leadership of the young director William Gas kill, and in 1960 he became a play-reader at the Court. On December 9, 1962, *The Pope's Wedding* was given a single performance in a Sunday night "production without decor" at the Court, the first performance of a play by Bond. By that time, Bond had written five radio plays, two television plays, and seven plays for the theatre, all of which had been rejected. In 1964, *Saved* was accepted for production by the Royal Court, which duly submitted it to the Lord Chamberlain's Office, then charged with the licensing of plays. When the Lord Chamberlain demanded many substantial cuts and changes to the script, the Royal Court declared itself a private club theatre for the production of *Saved*, which opened on November 3, 1965. Bond was finally able to become a full-time writer.

Bond has been a prolific writer. He has written thirty-one plays that have been produced, four screenplays, two books of poems and songs, and adaptations of classics such as Chekhov's *The Three Sisters sndThe Cherry Orchard*. His plays have been translated into twenty-five languages and have had productions throughout the world. In 1977 Edward Bond accepted an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University.

Plot Summary

Scene One

The play opens in the living-room. Pam has brought Len home for sex. She insists on using the living-room because her bed isn't made. They have just met and when Len asks Pam her name, she says, "Yer ain' arf nosey." They have trouble getting comfortable. Harry, her father, comes in and goes out again. Len is somewhat disconcerted, but Pam doesn't seem to mind the interruption at all. Pam and Len continue their sex play, Harry again puts his head in, and Pam and Len offer him candy (laced with sexual innuendo). Finally, they hear Harry leave the house for work and as Pam undoes Len's belt, Len says, "This is the life."

Scene Two

Scene Two takes place in a park near the flat. Len and Pam are in a boat on an otherwise bare stage. The audience learns that Len is now a boarder in the flat. They also speak of their relationship, the fact that Harry and Mary haven't spoken in so many years Pam can't remember when the silence started or why, that they had a boy during World War II and that he was killed by a bomb in this park. Fred, the boat handler, calls them in and makes crude sexual jokes. Len jokes back, and it is obvious that Pam is attracted to Fred.

Scene Three

Pete, Barry, Mike, and Colin meet in the park. Pete is dressed in a suit because he is going to the funeral of a boy he killed with his van intentionally, he says. He openly seeks the admiration of the others and they do admire him for the killing and the fact that he got away with it. They tease Barry and there is lots of low and crude sexual humor. Len comes in and Colin recognizes him from school years before. Mary enters with groceries, Len goes to help her, and there are more crude sexual jokes among the gang.

Scene Four

Scene Four takes place in the living-room. Mary puts food on the table, Len eats, and Harry dozes in the armchair. Pam enters in her slip, turns on the TV and puts on makeup. The TV doesn't work properly and no one knows how to adjust it. The baby starts to cry off-stage and continues to cry throughout the scene. No one does anything to comfort the baby. The only other actions consists of bickering about where Pam should dress and small domestic concerns. Fred arrives and Pam nags him about being late and they leave, Len clears the table and Harry tells Len it is better for him to sleep

with his door closed so he won't hear Pam and Fred in her room. The baby continues to scream uncomforted.

Scene Five

Pam is sick in bed and Len tries to comfort her. She is pining for Fred, who has dumped her. Len fetches the baby and Pam wants nothing to do with it; she hasn't looked at it for weeks. (It is worth noting that throughout the play the baby is referred to only as "it" by all the other characters.) Len has bribed Fred with tickets for a football game so he will visit Pam.

Scene Six

The park. Fred is fishing and chatting with Len about his equipment and how to bait a hook all done with cheap sexual innuendo. Len has been fired from his job for staying away from work to care for Pam. Pam comes in with the baby in its pram. She tries to make Fred promise to call on her and he evades her. The baby is drugged with aspirin to keep it quiet and it has had pneumonia once. Pam stamps out in a fit of temper, leaving the baby there, and Len goes after Pam. One by one the rest of the gang wander on talking about sex and making cheap jokes. Barry spots the baby and after violently shoving the pram at Pete, they begin to tease the baby by pinching it. The others, including Fred, join in pinching it, spitting on it, rubbing its face in its own excrement, and finally stoning it to death. After they leave, Pam returns and wheels the pram off without looking into it.

Scene Seven

Fred is in a jail cell and Pam visits him. Fred is outraged because he was attacked by a group of housewives when being brought to jail. Pam feels no animus towards Fred and Fred feels no responsibility for the murder of the baby. He blames Pam for having the baby in the first place and for bringing it to the park. He blames gangs of vandals and even blames the police for not doing their job and stopping the murder. Len brings cigarettes to Fred and, after Pam leaves, tells Fred that he had watched the whole thing.

Scene Eight

Harry is ironing clothes in the living-room and chatting with Len. Len has a job again and Pam is still obsessed with Fred. Pam enters drying her hair and immediately accuses Harry and Len of stealing her *Radio Times* magazine. She and Len engage in a silly but verbally violent spat.

Scene Nine

Len is in the living-room cleaning his shoes when Mary enters in her slip and gets ready to go to the movies with a friend. Mary tells Len to feel free to take women to his room. She tears her stocking near the top and asks Len to sew it while she still has it on. While he is sewing them, Harry enters. He watches Len and Mary and then leaves. Len asks Mary to stay in for the evening, but she says she must go.

Scene Ten

Len and Pam are sitting at a table in a cafe waiting for Fred to arrive with his mates for a breakfast to celebrate his release from prison. Pam tries to get Len to leave but he won't go. Fred enters accompanied by the gang and his new girl, Liz. The jokes are still cheaply sexual and stale. Pam attempts to force herself on Fred and is dismissed and humiliated. Liz continually asks Fred what it is like "inside." Len asks Fred what it felt like when he was killing the baby. Finally, the gang and Liz go off and Len tries once more to reconcile with Pam and once more is rebuffed.

Scene Eleven

In the living-room. The table is set for tea. Mary claims the teapot is hers and pours Harry's cup of tea on the floor. They have a verbal fight in which Mary claims most of the things in the house are hers and Harry accuses Mary of being "filthy" with Len. Mary hits him in the head with the teapot. When Harry tells Pam the fight was because Len had Mary's dress up, Len shakes him and Pam cries and blames all her troubles even the death of the baby on Len. Len says he will move out.

Scene Twelve

Len is on the floor of his bedroom listening to Pam in the room below. Harry enters dressed in white long underwear and white socks with his head in a skull cap of bandages. Harry has come to say goodnight. Len says he never touched Mary and when he points out that Harry and Mary had a row over it, Harry says, "She had a row." Harry talks of his time in World War II. He remembers it mostly as peace and quiet with a couple of blow-ups. He asks Len not to move out. Harry plans to move out, but when it suits him, not Mary. In the meantime, he will retreat to his room more.

Scene Thirteen

The living-room. Len is fixing a chair, Mary is clearing the table, Pam sits on the couch reading her *Radio Times*, and Harry is filling out his football betting slip. The only dialogue in the scene is when Len asks Pam to fetch his hammer. She does not. Len continues trying to fix the chair and the others continue their empty activities.

Characters

Barry

Barry, age twenty and described as a little below medium height and fat, is one of the working-class louts who hang around together in South London. There is little to distinguish Barry from his friends, but it is he who leads the assault on the baby in scene six and who throws the last stone at the baby at point blank range.

Colin

Colin, age eighteen, has "shiny ears, curved featureless face" and "shouts to make himself heard." He is one of the group of male working-class layabouts centered around Fred.

Fred

Fred, age twenty-one, blond, good looking, and powerfully built, is the man Pam becomes obsessed with and who she claims is the father of her baby. Although he is only one of the gang that murders the baby in the park, Fred is the one who is charged and who goes to jail. Still, Fred feels he is not guilty of a crime because "It were only a kid." Fred, like the others, is never able to see the baby as a human being. Women are very attracted to Fred and he has a new woman, Liz, waiting for him when he is released from jail.

Harry

Harry, Pam's father and Mary's husband, is silent for most of the play. Harry fought in World War II and now holds a non-descript night job. He and Mary have not spoken for years, and when they do speak it is to engage in a violent row in which Mary breaks a teapot on Harry's head. Near the end of the play, Harry does open up to a certain degree with Len and begs him not to move out of the house.

Len

Len is the central character of the play. He is twenty-one, "tall, slim, firm, bony," and he works at various jobs as a laborer. Pam brings him home to have sex in scene one and he stays as a boarder. Len is good natured and determined to be helpful, even to the extent of trying to reconcile Fred with Pam, even though he is still in love with Pam himself. Len is not a noble character he is a product of his society, which does not allow nobility and he does not rise above the arid culture of his South London working class background. Len does, however, hold on to his human values of compassion and

tolerance, and he does refuse to surrender to the bleak spiritual and moral degradation of the other characters.

Liz

Liz, who appears in only one scene, is an empty slut who is awaiting Fred when he is released from prison.

Mary

Mary, Pam's mother, is fifty-three, short with bulky breasts, big thighs, and "curled gray hair that looks as if it is in a hair-net. Homely." She and her husband Harry have not spoken for many years, though neither seems to remember the cause. Mary is not a warm mother-figure, however. She claims to feel pity for the crying baby but does nothing to comfort it; she bashes Harry on the head with a teapot; she partakes in a highly sexual scene with Len. She is as empty of human values as her daughter, Pam.

Mike

Mike is another of the gang of inarticulate louts and is practically indistinguishable from his mates.

Pam

Pam, age twenty-three, is the central female character in the play. She seduces Len in the livingroom of the flat she shares with her parents, Harry and Mary. She is unperturbed when her father comes into the room. Although Len falls in love with her and stays on as a boarder, Pam quickly tires of Len and falls for Fred. She takes Fred to her room for sex, knowing that the rest of the family, including Len, are listening. She has a baby, claiming Fred as the father, but never recognizes it as human. She apparently feels no remorse when the baby is murdered and remains obsessed with Fred. She meets him on his release from prison, offers him her room to stay in, and is rejected. Pam is the epitome of those whom Max Le Blond in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* says are "condemned to crawl like lice on the underbelly of the welfare state." She ends the play in silence, studying her *Radio Times* and dumbly facing an empty future which she is too inarticulate to contemplate.

Pete

Pete, at age twenty-five, is the oldest of the gang of louts and represents the epitome of their aspirations. His only real distinction is that he has killed a boy with his truck, an act that he claims to have committed deliberately. He seeks admiration from the rest of the

group and he receives that admiration. He initiates much of the brutality in the murder of the baby.

Themes

Alienation and Loneliness

All of the characters in *Saved* suffer alienation from the natural world, from each other, from their work, and from society as a whole; the result is extreme loneliness. The stoning of the baby is only an extreme example of the alienation from all that is natural the continuation of the species and humane: no one even recognizes that the baby is human. Len is the only character who seems to retain even the *capacity* for compassion, the only one who continues to reach out to others. Nothing illustrates Len's loneliness more than his asking Fred what he has that makes Pam so in love with him. There is slight hope: in his bumbling way Harry does reach out and asks Len not to leave their household. Len is the only human they know and he is needed if the rest are to continue to exist at all.

Anger and Hatred

Anger and hatred are the results of the alienation felt by the characters towards all areas of their lives. These feelings are expressed throughout the play: Pete's killing of the boy; Mary and Harry's long lasting silence and the violence that takes place when that silence is broken; Pam's diatribe over her missing magazine; the stoning of the baby. Perhaps even more frightful than the outbursts is the seething fury that the family represses all the time and which is especially evident in the final, silent, scene.

Guilt and Innocence

The murder of the baby, obviously, represents the Biblical Slaughter of the Innocents. Assigning guilt for that act, however, is no simple matter. Fred accepts the penalty, but not out of any sense of guilt: he blames Pam for leaving the baby in the park and for having it in the first place; he blames "roving gangs;" he blames the police for not doing their job. Fred accepts the punishment because that makes him a hero of the criminal class, which he sees operating all around him in all areas of his life. Pete feels no guilt for killing the boy with his van, and he is admired for getting away with it by the others. Harry feels no guilt for killing the soldier in the war and even considers himself "one of the lucky ones" for having had the experience. There is no guilt assigned for the baby, Harry and Mary's son, who was killed by a bomb in the park during the war. Bond places the guilt for the actions of his characters squarely on the society as a whole for having created the inhuman conditions in which they live.

Limitations and Opportunities

There are no opportunities for the characters in *Saved*. They are limited by their births: they were born into the working class of South London; they have very limited

education; they have no contact with the larger culture; and they are inarticulate even about their own lives. Len works at two or three different jobs during the course of the play, but they are interchangeable and not worth talking about; Harry goes off to work, but won't talk about it; Fred is in charge of boat rentals; Pete drives a van. Work is something which holds no interest for those who do it and it provides no benefits except small pay. The lack of meaningful work is part of the reason the characters are alienated from their own lives.

Love and Passion

Although *Saved* deals with sexual partnerings, there is little passion and even less love involved. Len and Pam don't even know each others' names when they first start to have sex. They even joke with one another about how many others they have had. Fred uses Pam but never expresses feelings of love or demonstrates passion. Harry and Mary no longer even speak but there never seems to have been a time when they felt love, and Harry talks of sex as something that is "up to the man." Even Pam's obsession with Fred would be hard to construe as love. Only Len seems to feel love and to express it through a desire to give and to care for others.

Morals and Morality

Morals and morality as an inherent social guide, or even as an abstract guide, do not seem to apply in the society in which *Saved* takes place. Being able to "get away with it" is the criteria for behavior. Pete is admired for killing a boy and not being charged; killing the baby takes place partly because there is no one in authority to see and, as Pete says, "You don't get a chance like this every day." However, Bond is by extension talking about the larger society which condones killing, as Harry did during the war and as his son was killed by a bomb, and which daily kills the spirit of its children.

Science and Technology

Bond sees science and technology, the basis for the industrial society, as the twin evils that have separated mankind from the natural world. There is no longer the satisfaction of creating or even individually contributing for the laborers and factory workers. They have no control over their jobs or how they carry out their work; they never see the end-product as reflecting their efforts. They are forced into regimens that are both physically and psychologically unnatural. Their rewards are material, and even the material is divorced from their understanding and control; i.e., the TV set that they are helpless to adjust. They have become parts of the industrial and technological machine, crowded into an unnatural environment of row houses and government housing that are created to serve the machine; and, the result is that they have lost their humanity. Fred standing in the park with a fishing rod purchased with time payments and fishing in an artificial lake is a powerful image of man's alienation from nature and himself.

Sex

Sex has become an impersonal activity for the characters in *Saved*. Len and Pam use each other in Scene One without even knowing each others' names, and this has apparently happened many times for both of them. Fred uses Pam and then discards her, feeling no responsibility for his actions. The sexual hunt is calculated and impersonal: the church social club and the all-night laundromats are seen as prime hunting grounds. The closest to a humanly warm sexual encounter in *Saved* takes place between Len and Mary when he darns her stocking and becomes aroused. But even there it seems that Mary has calculated just how far she will go and has consciously used Len for her own ego gratification. The alienation of the sexual act from warm human contact is merely one aspect of the dehumanizing lives these people are forced to live.

Violence

Certainly violence occurs in *Saved.* Most of the public outrage was caused by the extreme violence of the baby killing in Scene Six. As Bond says in the introduction to the Methuen edition of *Early Morning*, "I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austin wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society ... It would be immoral not to write about violence." The violence witnessed in Scene Six is sickening, as is the violence regarding the manner in which Pete killed the boy with his van. Violence is the natural result of the depersonalizing aspects of the society in which it takes place, the physical and psychological twisting of the human to fit the work pattern of the industrialized world, the lack of control over their own lives, the crowding together in a sterile environment with no sense of cultural roots.

Style

Setting

Saved has thirteen scenes with an intermission suggested after the seventh. Six of the scenes are set in the living-room of the flat in the working-class area of South London that is shared by Harry, his wife Mary, and their daughter Pam and, after the first scene, Len and two in an attic bedroom in the same flat; three are in a nearby park; one scene is in a jail cell; and one takes place in a cafe. All of the scenes call for very simple settings. The park is a bare stage (with a boat on it for Scene Two). The interior scenes are also very simply represented: a narrow triangle of flats upstage, giving a very enclosed feeling, with the necessary furniture in front of that for the flat; tables and chairs without the upstage flats for the cafe, and a simple jail-door flat for the jail-cell scene. The settings become more claustrophobic as the lives of the characters become more constricted: all of the park scenes are in the first act and four of the living-room scenes and one of the bedroom scenes are in the second act.

Plot

The plot of *Saved* takes place over a period of about two years. Bond does not show *development* of characters over that time but rather shows episodes in the lives of the characters. There is no explanation of what went on during the sometimes considerable time that has elapsed between episodes other than major events: Pam had her baby, Len lost a job, Len got a job, Fred served his time in prison. This lack of detailed accounts of time not shown leads the audience to assume indeed, to *feel* that the lives of the characters have continued with the same drab existence. As it accrues, the audience comes to realize that the background is the subject and the episodic actions are only punctuations.

An interesting plot device is the placing of the murder of the baby in the first act. Although the scene is central to the play, by placing it in the first act Bond is able to focus attention on the situation surrounding the murder, rather than focusing on the build-up to the murder. The murder itself is stunningly shocking because it goes against all that society claims to believe: babies are to be protected. But, given the situation, the murder is inevitable and other similar atrocities in the future are also inevitable because no one seems to be seriously affected by it, not even Pam, the baby's mother.

Character Development

With the exception of Len, there is really no character development at all in *Saved* and that is deliberate and part of the point of the play. These characters do not grow, they do not learn from their experiences. Moreover, no explanations are given of their lives or behaviors so that the audience comes to understand their plight. That also is deliberate. As Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts point out in *Bond: A Study of His Plays*, "Emotive

demands for sympathy from the stage can only muddle the issue. Once you sympathize with somebody, you make excuses for them. If you make excuses for that sort of behavior, then you condone it and then you condone what creates the situation." Bond wants his audience to react to his view of society by taking action and changing the society itself, not by simply feeling compassion for the characters trapped in their hopeless situations. Therefore, the audience is shown effects which, individually and cumulatively, are shocking and the audience must then involve themselves to arrive at the causes.

Language

The language in *Saved* is so authentic that the Hill and Wang edition has twenty-seven footnotes to explain the meaning of words or phrases. Some of the English critics, who do not come from the working-class, had trouble understanding some of the language, but all admitted that it certainly sounded natural enough. However, Bond's language is not simple transcription; it is carefully chosen and shaped to convey the play's motivation and themes. Its short, staccato structure, while basically used as aggression or to defend against the aggression of others, or even simply to keep others away, is also highly poetic and frequently comic. As Richard Scharine has pointed out in *The Plays of Edward Bond*, the characters in *Saved* mistrust words and for them "language as a tool functions only to hold others at a distance."

Historical Context

In 1948, as a result of several acts of Parliament, Great Britain (the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) became what has become popularly known as a "Welfare State." The intent was to provide a more equitable distribution of the national wealth and to provide the basic needs of food, shelter, health care, and education for all of the country's citizens. Basic services, such as transportation, telephone, electrical, gas, and water utilities were nationalized, as were the steel, coal, and petroleum industries. While extreme by United States standards, the Welfare State remained basically a capitalist economy.

The class hierarchy, ranging from agrarian workers and urban working-class through the various levels of the middle-class to the established levels of the aristocracy remained in place, although, theoretically, it became easier to move up the social and, especially, the economic scale.

The level of education was dependent upon success in examinations taken at various stages. Edward Bond attended the Crouch End Modern School after World War II and was thought not good enough to take the eleven-plus examination, which, if passed, would have allowed him to progress to grammar school (the equivalent of high school in the United States). Thus, his formal education ended at age fifteen, the level at which the majority of British students ended their formal education and entered the work force.

National Service, known in the United States as the "draft," was required of every able-bodied male for a period of two years.

Elsewhere, the United States began bombing North Vietnam as a general policy and the first deployment of U.S. combat troops in Vietnam took place in 1965. Malcolm X was assassinated. Voter registration marchers were attacked by Alabama police and Federalized National Guard troops were sent in to protect them. President Johnson announced programs for a "Great Society" to eliminate poverty in America. "Early Bird," the world's first commercial satellite, was put into orbit and began to relay telephone messages and television programs between the United States and Europe.

The Arts Council of Great Britain had been established immediately following World War II, providing government funds to support all the arts throughout Great Britain. Although support was meager at first, it did have an enormous impact on making the arts available to everyone. Among those receiving support was the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in London, formed in 1956 to support playwrights whose work had no chance of finding an initial commercial production. It quickly became the inspiration and the national home for new playwriting in Britain. In 1958 the Royal Court formed the "Writer's Group" to work with new writers and Edward Bond, still unproduced, was invited to become part of the group.

In 1965, theatre censorship was still operating under the authority of the Theatres Act of 1843, under which the Lord Chamberlain, head of the Queen's household, was given

absolute authority to determine what could and could not be produced on any stage in Great Britain. Plays had to be submitted to his office to receive a license before they could be performed. Stage censorship was an anomaly a play banned from the stage could be seen by millions on television or heard over the radio. BBC radio and television frequently produced the works of serious playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter and others who also wrote for theatre.

The Rolling Stones, still playing in pubs the year before, had a huge success with *Satisfaction*. In the United States, the Grateful Dead had its beginning in San Francisco; "op" and "pop" art were fashionable; Congress passed legislation creating the National Endowment of the Arts with an initial grant of $2,500,000.

Critical Overview

The critical reaction to *Saved* was, for the most part, a slaughter. Irving Wardle of *The Times (London)* said that "The most charitable interpretation of the play would be as a counterblast to theatrical fashion, stripping off the glamour to show that cruelty is disgusting and that domestic naturalism *is* boring. But the writing itself, with its self-admiring jokes and gloating approach to moments of brutality and erotic humiliation does not support this view ... it amounts to a systematic degradation of the human animal." Herbert Kretzmer of the *Daily Express* said, "It is peopled with characters who, almost without exception, are foul-mouthed, dirty-minded, illiterate, and barely to be judged on any recognizable human level at all." J. C. Trewin of *The Illustrated London News* said, "It may not be the feeblest thing I have seen on any stage, but it is certainly the nastiest, and contains perhaps the most horrid scene in the contemporary theatre. (Even as I write that hedging perhaps' I delete it: nobody can hedge about *Saved*.)" B. A. Young, critic for *The Financial Times*, despised the play and said, "if such things are really going on in South London they are properly the concern of the police and the magistrates rather than the audience of theatres, even the Royal Court." Even those reviews that were positive were not geared to bring in the audiences. Penelope Gilliatt of *The Observer* gave a thoughtful and positive review; but it started with "I spent a lot of the first act shaking with claustrophobia and thinking I was going to be sick. The scene where a baby in a pram is pelted to death by a gang is nauseating. The swagger of the sex jokes is almost worse." Alan Brien of *The Sunday Telegraph* was deeply moved and wrote, "It appears that the British audiences and critics can stomach unlimited helpings of torture, sadism, perversion, murder and bestiality when perpetrated by foreigners upon foreigners in the past. . . . But when Edward Bond in *Saved* at the Royal Court shows us London youths, here and now, beating and defiling a bastard baby ... then a cry goes up to ban and boycott such criminal libels on our national character.... *Saved* makes an unsympathetic, disturbing, wearing, sometimes boring evening in the theatre. But I believe it fulfills one of the basic functions of the drama ... that of making us remember the monster behind the mask on every one of us."

Although the box office suffered (fifty percent of the seats were sold and 36.7 percent of the possible box office takings were realized during the entire run), the Royal Court kept the play running. And, many of the most influential of the theatre profession rallied to the cause, including Laurence Olivier. Mary McCarthy, the American author, praised the play for its "remarkable delicacy."

Saved had better receptions abroad. Bond was a favorite in Germany and by March, 1968, *Saved* had had more separate productions in Germany than it had had *performances* in England. It received its American premiere at the Yale Repertory Theatre in December, 1968, and shortly after had its Canadian premiere at McGill University in Montreal. A retrospective season of Bond plays, including *Saved*, opened at the Royal Court on February 7,1969. The critical reactions were very different for this production. Irving Wardle said, "it is now time for the guilty reviewers to queue up and excuse their past arrogance and obtuseness as best they may. As one of the guiltiest, I am glad to acknowledge that my feeling toward the plays has changed, and that if I had

originally responded to them as I do now, I should not have applied words like 'half-baked' and 'untalented' to *Saved* and *Early Morning.*"

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Dr. Browne is the author o/Playwrights' Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre *and* Off Off Broadway: Art and Economics. *In this essay he discusses the power of visual and aural images in Bond's play.*

When *Saved* by Edward Bond opened on November 3, 1965, at the Royal Court Theatre in London, the audience, usually polite in the theatre, shouted abuse at the stage and had physical fights in the lobbies during the intermission and after the play. Among other things, those reactions testify to the power of theatre to make ideas concrete and emotionally gripping.

It is important to remember that reading a play can give only hints at what the power of the play in performance is like. In the theatre the images that are created by the author and brought to physical reality by the director, actors, and designers are experienced by the audience *directly* and immediately without any thought about how they are created or even what they mean. Bond very carefully creates images that cause very powerful responses and, like any powerful experience, linger in the memory.

The image in *Saved* that created the most immediate outrage was, of course, the murder of the baby in its pram. As reported by Hay and Roberts in *Bond: A Study of His Plays*, in the first three drafts of the play Bond had the hoodlums taking the baby out of its pram and tossing it about before murdering it while the baby screamed. As finally performed, the baby is drugged and silent and we never see it. The audience does see the group of thugs torturing the baby or, rather, *reporting* on the torture in a rising frenzy of excitement. Our imaginations provide the details. Moreover, the baby's father, Fred, is lounging downstage at the edge of the "lake." The picture that emerges in the theatre is an almost ritualistic killing punctuated finally by the sounds of the stones smashing into the "baby" in the pram. The fact that we know that a real baby is not in the pram only adds to the feeling of ritual. The audience feels sickened and outraged because they are witnessing not just a random act of violence but an image which speaks of an ongoing savagery toward helpless infants by boys who are little more than children themselves, children of the society of which the audience themselves are a part.

Bond emphasizes the abstract nature of the criminals by calling for them to make "a curious buzzing" like a swarm of insects as they exit. The ritualistic aspect of the scene is further enhanced when Pam returns and coos baby-talk in a "singsong voice, loudly but to herself" in a ritual of motherly care which she never truly displays. It is important to remember that this scene is performed on a bare stage with the location suggested only by the dialogue and the fact that Fred is "fishing" at the opening of the scene. The austerity of the setting further enforces the ritualistic feeling, a ritual in which, as in all ritual, the audience are both observers and, by their very presence, participants. The whole thing is so horrible, so against what we purport to hold most sacred the protection of our children that the reaction is immediate and uncensored and uncontemplated horror.

While the ritualistic murder of the baby caused the most outrage, Scene Nine, in which Len mends Mary's stocking while she is wearing it, placed second. The highly Oedipal inferences of Len having foreplay to sex with his mother-figure was certainly clear. The sight of the middle-aged Mary with her dress pulled up and her leg on a stool while Len kneeled directly in front of her made the audiences "uncomfortable" and caused complaints. When Len turns the lights off and walks to the couch with a handkerchief in his hand, a scene of extreme loneliness, the implication was clear. Again, the reaction was not an intellectualized distaste, but an *immediate* reaction against a scene which breaks one of society's deepest taboos.

Scene Eleven begins with the comedic image of Mary moving the teapot so that Harry cannot reach it, then emptying the tea on the floor all the while childishly claiming that it is hers, not theirs. The comic tone quickly changes, though, when Mary and Harry quarrel, giving vent to years of pent-up rage in a scene that Hay and Roberts find in many respects far more terrible than the killing of the baby because it comes with so many years of hate behind it. Certainly the sight and *sound* of Mary hitting Harry in the head with the full teapot is terrible. Further stage directions call for Harry to wave he bread knife in a gesture misconstrued by Pam as threatening; Pam sprawled on the couch sobbing; Len caught between; and Mary standing and condemning Harry to stay in his room.

Even when violence takes place elsewhere, as with the killing of the boy that is discussed by the gang in Scene Three, the immediate stage image is important. The description of the killing as related by Pete is disgusting, but has nowhere near the power of actually seeing it take place. What the visual stage image does convey is the casual attitude the boys strike while talking about it. It is a scene of cruel, unfeeling braggadocio. The final verbal image we are left with is Pete's suggestion that they should flush the dead boy down the toilet.

Other visual images in *Saved* are also powerful. Critic Penelope Gilliatt wrote of "shaking with claustrophobia." Part of that feeling came from being trapped in a world of casual sex and casual murder; part of the feeling no doubt was also brought on by the setting, which was sparse yet cramped spaces of the interiors, and the blank stage with no hints of nature or horizons in the exterior scenes.

Perhaps the most difficult scene for the reader to imagine with anything like the stage reality is Scene Four. The action is simple: Pam is getting ready to go out with Fred, and Mary, Harry, and Len have supper. The power of this scene comes from the *aural* images: the TV set plays "fairly loud," and the off-stage baby cries without a break throughout the scene approximately eight minutes. One does not react with the intellect to a crying baby; one reacts with the whole body and nervous system. Our almost uncontrollable instinct is to do something to care for the baby, and the people on stage do nothing. Through the sounds the empty sound of the TV, the idle chatter of the people, and the ceaseless crying and screaming of the baby the audience can't help *but feel* the empty desperation of these people.

A subtle visual image is created in Scene Twelve through Harry's costume: long white underwear, pale socks, no shoes, and his head in a skull cap of bandages. Harry comes to Len as a ghost, both of his own past and, perhaps, of Len's future. Again, Bond calls for there to be a knife in this scene, held by Len. It might appear at first that Len would attack Harry, thus carrying out the Oedipal theme of killing his father figure that runs through the play, but that threat quickly disappears. Instead, Harry does his best to reach out to Len and even gives some account of his past.

The final scene is a powerful image that sums up the state of the family, a condition from which there seems to be no rescue. Harry fills out his football betting slip in silence; Mary clears away the dishes from the table, wipes up, and straightens the couch; Pam looks at her *Radio Times* magazine, goes out, comes back; Len tries to fix the chair that was broken when Harry fell on it in Scene Eleven, and he utters the only line "Fetch me ammer" which is ignored. The silence is punctuated by early off-stage sounds of Len pounding on the chair, his on-stage slapping of the chair with his hand, and at one point, after a short silence, Pam "quickly turns over two pages." Amidst the silence, each of these sounds rings out and even the turning of the magazine pages is jolting in the theatre. Each sound and each movement is carefully arranged.

Edward Bond created in *Saved* a play that at first glance seemed to be a naturalistic representation of life in the crowded, working-class area of South London. The world he presents is viscous and empty of humane values. The full effect of his vision, however, can be felt only in the theatre where his carefully constructed visual images and sounds cause the audience to respond viscerally, to *experience* the play. Later the individual audience member will ponder that experience and draw his or her own conclusions about what the life portrayed means. One might even come to understand deeply what Bond means when he says in his introduction to the play, "Clearly the stoning to death of a baby in a London park is a typical English understatement. Compared to the strategic' bombing of German towns it is a negligible atrocity, compared to the cultural and emotional deprivation of most of our children its consequences are insignificant."

Critical Essay #2

Cardullo examines the religious imagery in Bond's play, noting that, contrary to the title, "no one achieves religious salvation."

In his "Author's Note" to *Saved* (1965) Edward Bond wrote:

If we are to improve people's behaviour we must first increase their moral understanding, and this means teaching morality to children in a way that they find convincing. Although I suppose that most English people do not consciously disbelieve in the existence of God, not more than a few hundred of them fully believe in his existence. Yet almost all the morality taught to our children is grounded in religion. This in itself makes children morally bewildered religion has nothing to do with their parents' personal lives, or our economic, industrial and political life, and is contrary to the science and rationalism they are taught at other times. For them religion discredits the morality it is meant to support.... If [people] are interested in the welfare of others they should ask "what is it possible for most people to believe?" And that means teaching, oddly enough, moral scepticism and analysis, and not faith.

The title of *Saved* is ironic. No one achieves religious salvation in the play. The possibility of achieving it does not seem to exist for the characters: no one prays, even though everyone is in some kind of misery; characters invoke God's name mostly in anger, disgust, or impatience (they say "Chriss" a word as close to "crisis," when spoken, as "Christ"). Fred, in prison for murdering his and Pam's baby, does say "God 'elp us" (p. 59), but less because he believes in God than because he wants to comfort the crying Pam, who has come to visit him. Since he is completely unrepentant, his words ring even hollower than they normally would.

Bond teaches moral scepticism and analysis in *Saved*, not faith. He implies that his characters are in crisis in part because "for them religion [has discredited] the morality it [was] meant to support." They are now without religion and some, like Fred, Pete, Mike, Colin, and Barry, are completely without morality. Children who disbelieve in religion, writes Bond, "grow up morally illiterate, and cannot understand, because they have not been properly taught, the nature of a moral consideration or the value of disinterested morals at all" (p. 7). Pete, for example, not only instigates the attack on Pam's baby, he also intentionally runs over another child with his truck. Len, Harry, Mary, and Pam have some morality. They are the main characters, and all four live under one roof. So determined is Harry not to be taken advantage of by Mary, his wife, that he can behave morally toward her only in spite of himself. He "saves" Mary at the same time he forsakes her. He asks Len to remain with the family, not only because he likes him and enjoys his company, but also because Len will become a companion to his wife and will possibly help to support her after he, Harry, leaves:

Harry I'd like yer t' stay. If yer can see yer way to. *Len* Why? *Harry* [after a slight pause]. I ain' stayin'. *Len* What? *Harry* Not always.... I'll go when I'm ready. When she's on 'er pension. She won't get no one after 'er then. I'll be *out.* Then see 'ow she copes. *Len*

Ain't worth it, pop. *Harry* It's only right. When someone carries on like 'er, they 'ave t' pay for it. People can't get away with murder. What'd 'appen then? (p. 93)

Len is the family's savior. He occupies a curious position in their house. He is like a son to Harry and Mary, yet he is not their son (their own boy was killed in a terrorist bombing). He was once their daughter Pam's lover, but isn' t anymore; still he has remained her loving friend through all her trials and despite her harsh treatment of him. He nearly becomes Mary's lover at one point; he settles for building her self-esteem rather than satisfying his lust. In Scene 13, the last one in *Saved*, he is still with his adopted family, and we infer that he will be staying: he is repairing a wobbly chair, the one Harry tripped over and damaged in his fight with Mary in Scene 11. Three of the chair's legs are secure, one is loose. Len is the family's fourth leg. He is the outsider who comes in and, through extraordinary sympathy for them and instinctive analysis of their problems, holds the family together. (He says to Pam after Fred deserts her for the last time, "Can't we try an' get on like before. There's no one else. Yer only live once" [p. 83].) Len has at once an affection for and an objectivity about Harry, Mary, and Pam that only someone in his position of adopted son-spurned lover could have. His behavior is, from a conventional point of view, eccentric. Nevertheless he is inveterately moral: he helps to convict Fred of murder, then brings hint cigarettes in jail; he is jilted by Pam, yet cares for her child by Fred.

At the end of *Saved*, Len is in the position of savior: of the chair, literally, and of the family, figuratively. He has been having a lot of trouble stabilizing the chair, so he throws his whole body into "saving" it. He himself becomes the fourth leg without which the other three cannot be secure; he contorts or sacrifices his body: "*Len slips his left arm round the back of the chair. His chest rests against the side edge of the seat. The fingers of his right hand touch the floor. His head lies sideways on the seaf*" (p. 96). The oblique reference to Christ on the cross is, of course, ironic, since Christ has had nothing to do with Len's good works in the play. As Len works on the chair, Pam reads the *Radio Times*, which, she had complained in Scene 8, was always missing when she wanted it she is now in an emotional state very different from her desperate one at the end of Scene 11, when she said, "[*crying*]. I'll throw myself somewhere. It's the only way.... I can't stand any more. Baby dead. No friends" (p. 88). The four family members appear to have just had their first supper together in the play Mary "collects the plates" (p. 94) from the table, whereas she had cracked her teapot on Harry's head in Scene 11. Harry fills in the football coupon that he left blank in Scene 9, when he walked in on Len making a pass at Mary. There is not a word of argument in Scene 13; there have been fierce arguments in previous scenes. Indeed, not a word is spoken except by Len: midway in the scene he asks Pam to get him a hammer. She leaves the living room, where they all are, but returns without the hammer. Len says nothing, continuing to work on the chair. It is as if he realizes that it will take a sheer act of will to repair the recalcitrant chair, even as it has taken one to hold together a family on the verge of disintegration.

Source: "Bond's *Saved*" in the *Explicator*, Vol. 44, no. 3, Spring, 1986, pp. 62-64.

Critical Essay #3

In this essay, Babula dissects the play's thirteenth scene, which he sees as pivotal in providing both the characters and the audience with the possibility that hope will survive despite the play's dark tone.

In an interview soon after the original production of *Saved*, Edward Bond stated, "If a problem matters to you, you have a solution or at least you have feelings towards a solution." In *Saved* the problem is the survival of hope. The solution, or at least the feeling towards a solution, is suggested by Bond's comment in an author's note on the conclusion of his play, "Clutching at straws is the only realistic thing to do." In Scene Thirteen Edward Bond gives his audience the straw to clutch at as he gives it to his characters on the stage. It is a moment of desperate optimism and a mad pantomime of affirmation. Yet Scene Thirteen gives the title of the drama its significance. Without that closing bit of action it would be almost impossible to find out who or even what is saved. Indeed, it is difficult to do so given Scene Thirteen.

Yet in that scene all the individual actions coming after the horror of the murder of the baby do have something in common: all of them are vaguely positive. Pam assuming the activity is positive is simply reading. While that may not be much, it is at least a first effort at those "straws." Mary, as the stage directions note, is picking up after the meal: Mary *takes things from the table and goes out.* Later, *She wipes the table top with a damp cloth*. Keeping herself orderly, *She takes off her apron and folds it neatly*. These female actions, which in Mary seem to be almost ritualistic, are barely enough to suggest that the world imaged on the stage has not disintegrated. Yet, they serve to introduce us to the positive activities of the men on stage. While none of the actions can be termed optimistic in the conventional sense of the word neither those of the men nor those of the women that is all that Bond allows his audience. In the dramatic world of *Saved,* the positive and meager action of the closing scene imitates the fact of a meager salvation.

The simple actions of Pam and Mary take on a greater significance in the silent movements of Harry. He comes in, searches through a drawer, finds ink and an envelope, takes out his pen and: *He starts to fill in his football coupon*. Throughout the scene Harry fills out the form, then stamps the envelope, then, in the last action before the curtain falls, Harry *licks the flap on the envelope and closes it quietly*. Harry's activity is one way in which Bond suggests the rather dismal salvation offered. It is the next step from the actions of the women. What could be more desperate and futile than a gamble on a football coupon? At the same time what could be more hopeful or wishful? It is the survival of such desperate hope that allows the odd family collected on stage at the end of the play to survive itself.

Most positive, though also trivial, is the central action of the closing scene: Len's repairing of a chair broken by Harry. As the scene progresses, the audience is suddenly struck by a sharp bang off stage. Perhaps it is a pistol shot, the antithesis of the salvation proposed by the dramatist. But no one on stage reacts. Then another follows

and Len carries in the broken chair. On stage the chair and Len become the obvious focus of the audience's attention. Like everyone else in Scene Thirteen Len seems to be acting out a kind of positive ritual. He crouches, he looks under the chair, he inverts it, he tries the loose leg. In fact, Len seems almost to embrace it:

He rests his left wrist high on the chair back and his right elbow in the chair seat. His right hand hangs in space. His back is to the audience.

Finally he speaks the only words spoken in this scene: "Fetch me 'ammer." Once again the audience is faced with the simultaneously positive and trivial. We are all grasping at straws.

But even this straw the dramatist denies to his audience. Len's plea for his hammer goes unanswered. This is no simple vision of people happily at work, surviving through a return to manual labor and commune-like cooperation. Yet Len does not give up; if no one will help he will continue on his own. Perhaps it is in this insistence by Len to go it alone that the audience finds Bond at his most positive. At this point, the stage directions concerning Len read:

He has grasped the seat at diagonally opposite corners, so that the diagonal is parallel with the front of his body. He brings the chair sharply down so that the foot furthest from him strikes the floor first.

The leg is still loose. In an act that appears almost sexual Len once more attempts to fix the broken leg:

He bends over the chair so that his stomach or chest rests on the seat. He reaches down with his left hand and pulls the loose rear leg into the socket.

This time the act is consummated and the leg fixed in the proper place.

Then exhaustion sets in upon Len:

Len slips his left arm round the back of the chair. His chest rests against the side edge of the seat. The fingers of his right hand touch the floor. His head lies sideways on the seat.

His weariness resembles the relaxation after intercourse. Absurd? Certainly. Yet, the action with the chair summarizes all the attempts at some sort of positive activity by Pam, Mary, and Harry. As an audience we see the positive presented together with the mad and the trivial. It is this double sense that allows Scene Thirteen to only be a "straw." The suggestion of sexuality presents the possibility of regeneration at the same time it presents the absurdity of the attempt. His action with the chair is like Harry's with the ticket: it is both desperate and hopeful. Yet each character, even though in isolation from the others as certainly Len is in his sex act has contributed some positive action to the total effect of the scene. Ultimately, the chair and the family portrait have been patched up at the close of the play. The audience has before it something both affirmative and absurd. How long can this repaired chair or family survive? The final

stage direction: *The curtain falls quickly* suggests that it is better not to ask. It is better rather to go on "clutching at straws."

Source: "Scene 13 of Bond's *Saved* " in *Modern Drama*, Vol. XV, no. 1, May, 1972, pp. 1479.

Topics for Further Study

How does the British secondary education system differ from that of the United States? Can you think of any changes that might benefit people such as those portrayed in *Saved*!

What is the "class system" in Britain? Does a class system exist in the United States? Discuss your opinions/ideas.

Compare *Saved* with a play by other working class writers such as Arnold Wesker or John Osborne (see What Do I Read Next?). Do the characters seem to have the same attributes? Are the worlds they live in the same?

Edward Bond believes that if people are crowded together, subjected to too much noise, and feel constantly threatened, they will become violent. Do you think there is merit in this? Can you think of areas near you where people live like that? Do you feel constantly threatened

Edward Bond thinks that the end product of working on an assembly line is dehumanization. Do you agree?

Compare and Contrast

1965: As part of the "Welfare State," the government owned and operated all public transportation, telephone, gas, electric, and water utilities, coal, petroleum, and steel industries. The government was by far the largest employer in the nation.

Today: All the industries listed above, including the utilities, have been privatized sold to stockholders to promote efficiency through greater competition.

1965: The United Kingdom was a leading trading nation but functioned as a separate entity financially and economically.

Today: In 1973, the United Kingdom became part of the European Economic Community (now called the European Union). This created the "Common Market" for economic integration of the member countries of Europe with a gradual increase in political integration.

1965: As part of the youth movement in popular culture, sexual freedom was being promulgated for both men and women.

Today: There is a great deal more sexual freedom in society in general and things are talked about and shown in the popular media that could not have been done in 1965.

1965: AIDS had not yet occurred at all and other sexually transmitted diseases were easily treated.

Today: AIDS has brought about a broad recognition that casual sex can lead to death.

1965: The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) provided the only television programming in the United Kingdom and operated two channels.

Today: BBC continues to produce television programming and now operates four television channels, with plans for a fifth. In addition, there are sixteen commercial program companies and, through home satellite television, there are dozens of channels available.

1965: Plays had to receive a license from the Lord Chamberlain before they could be produced for the public. He could demand changes or could ban the play *in toto*, and there was no appeal from his decision.

Today: There is no censorship of theatre. Plays are subject to the same common law provisions against libel and obscenity as are other areas of the media.

Further Study

Browne, Terry W. *Playwrights' Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, Pitman Publishing, Ltd., 1975.

Tells the story of the theatre that was primarily responsible for making theatre more socially relevant in post-World War II England. It contains a segment that deals in detail with the first Saved production and the ensuing court case.

Cohn, Ruby. *Retreats from Realism in Recent English Drama*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Deals with developments of British Drama since about 1965, including works by Edward Bond. It gives a good overview and covers briefly such critical movements as post-modernism.

Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volumes 13 & 14: *British Dramatists Since World War II*, Gale, 1982.

This excellent compilation contains entries on every major British dramatist since World War II and also includes articles on the Arts Council of Great Britain and all the major subsidized companies.

Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966.

Studies the social and physical pathologies that result from too little physical living space for people.

Hay, Malcolm, and Roberts, Philip. *Bond, A Study of His Plays*, Eyre Methuen, 1980.

The authors were given unrestricted access to Bond's correspondence, notes, rough drafts, and unpublished plays for their superb study of his work. They have also interviewed directors, designers, and others who worked on productions of his plays.

Hay, Malcolm, editor. *Bond on File*, Methuen, 1985.

This small volume includes excerpted reviews, performance history, and a selection of Bond's own comments on his work.

Hobson, Harold. *Theatre In Britain, 1920-1983* Phaidon Press Limited, 1984.

Harold Hobson, for many years the dean of English drama critics, gives an overview of his sixty-three years of attending theatre. This serves as a solid background about what was going on in general, and especially in the commercial theatre, in England during the time Edward Bond and others were developing and writing.

Scharine, Richard. *The Plays of Edward Bond*, Bucknell University Press; Associated University Press, 1976.

This is an excellent study of Bond's early works, through *The Sea*, 1973. It includes a section on techniques and themes which can be applied to Bond's later works as well.

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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.

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

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

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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.

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