Scoop Study Guide

Scoop by Evelyn Waugh

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (London, 1938) is a satire on journalism. It is based on Waugh's stint as a war correspondent for the London *Daily Mail* in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1935, during which he covered the war between Abyssinia and Italy. Waugh admitted that he had no aptitude for war reporting, but he did observe closely the activities of his fellow journalists. The result was a satirical, farcical novel that takes lighthearted but deadly aim at the newspaper industry and the journalistic profession.

The plot rests on some comic twists of fortune. Lord Copper, the arrogant and ignorant owner of the *Daily Beast*, sends out by mistake a naïve writer of nature columns, William Boot, to cover the war in the fictional East African country of Ishmaelia. Geographically, at least, Ishmaelia is identical with Abyssinia. William gets some quick lessons in the devious way of journalists, who are always trying to outwit their colleagues and deliver a scoop. Helped by a series of lucky events, William gets several major scoops himself and returns to London as a world-renowned reporter. But it all means nothing to him, and he is happy to return to his country home, the isolated and dilapidated Boot Magna Hall, where his many eccentric relatives live.

Author Biography

Evelyn Waugh was born on October 28, 1903, in Hampstead, London, England, the son of Arthur (an editor and publisher) and Catherine Charlotte (Raban) Waugh. He was enrolled at Lancing, a preparatory school, in 1917, where he wrote poetry, edited the school magazine, and was president of the debating society.

Waugh won a scholarship to Hertford College, Oxford, in 1922. At Oxford, he wrote poetry and stories for undergraduate magazines but, because of financial difficulties, he left the university in 1924 without graduating. He enrolled at Heatherley's Art School, and in 1925 he became a secondary school teacher in Wales and then in Buckinghamshire, England.

In 1927, Waugh married Evelyn Gardner. In 1928, his first novel, *Decline and Fall*, appeared. This was a satire on the English upper classes and the English educational system. While Waugh was writing his second novel, *Vile Bodies* (1930), he discovered that his wife was having an affair, so he filed for a divorce.

In 1930, he converted to Roman Catholicism, and he spent much of his time between 1929 and 1937 traveling. He visited the Mediterranean, Ethiopia (then known as Abyssinia), and North Africa, the West Indies and British Guiana, as well as Brazil, Mexico, and the Arctic. He reported on the Italian-Ethiopian war in 1935 and wrote several accounts of his travels, including *Remote People* (1931), about his African journey, and *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936).

Waugh's third novel, *Black Mischief*, was published in 1932 and cemented his reputation as a brilliant satirist. It was followed by the bleak *A Handful of Dust* (1934), before Waugh returned to lighthearted satire with *Scoop* (1938).

In 1936, the Catholic Church annulled his first marriage, and the following year Waugh married Laura Herbert. This inaugurated a more settled period in his life, although it was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Waugh was given an officer's commission in the Royal Marines; in 1941 he volunteered for service with the No. 8 Commando Forces in the Middle East, and he took part in several raids on the North African coast. In 1944, he joined the British Military Mission to Yugoslavia.

One of Waugh's best-known novels, *Brideshead Revisited*, was published after the war in 1945. It achieved international success, especially in the United States, where it was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. In 1948, Waugh went on a lecture tour of Catholic universities in the United States.

In the 1950s, Waugh's literary output continued, although the satirist of the 1930s had now developed a deep dislike for contemporary society. His work from this period included the war novels

Men at Arms (1952) and *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), an autobiographical novel, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957), and a novella, *Love Among the Ruins* (1953). His last novel was another war novel, *Unconditional Surrender* (1961), which was published in the United States as *The End of the Battle*.

Waugh died on April 10, 1966, in Combe Florey, Somerset, England.

Plot Summary

Book 1: The Stitch Service

Scoop begins as the young novelist John Courteney Boot visits his aristocratic friend, Mrs. Julia Stitch, in London. She is in bed, her face covered in a mask of clay while she directs domestic operations. With her are her secretary, her maid, her precocious eight-year-old daughter, and a workman who is painting ruined castles on the ceiling.

Later, Boot explains to Mrs. Stitch as she drives to an appointment that he must leave London because his American girlfriend is driving him crazy. Mrs. Stitch suggests that he go as a war correspondent to Ishmaelia, East Africa, where there is a crisis. She convinces the head of the Megalopolitan Newspaper Corporation, Lord Copper, that Boot is the man to cover the war. But Mr. Salter, the Foreign Editor at the *Daily Beast*, wrongly assumes that the William Boot who writes a nature column for the *Beast* is the man to whom Copper refers.

The countryman Boot lives in the ancient, dilapidated Boot Magna Hall with a crowd of eccentric relatives. William has no desire to leave his home and has never met anyone at the *Beast*. But when he receives a cable from Salter summoning him to London, he assumes it is because of an error in his column the previous week. He goes to London expecting to be fired. The encounter between William and Mr. Salter is uncomfortable for them both. After a series of comic misunderstandings, Salter asks him if he will go to Ishmaelia as a war correspondent. William politely declines, but when Salter tells him that, unless he goes to Ishmaelia, he will be fired, William reluctantly agrees.

The following morning, William meets Lord Copper. Copper wants the war in Ishmaelia to be resolved quickly and in a way that will create good news copy. After the meeting, Salter tries to explain to William who is fighting and why, but William is none the wiser.

After a comical episode in which William visits two rival Ishmaelite legations in London to get a visa, he flies by private plane to Paris, kindly allowing a stranger to fly with him. Then he boards the train for Marseilles, where he meets the stranger again, who turns out to be an Englishman. The stranger promises to repay William's favor whenever he can.

William then has an uncomfortable journey by sea to Aden. He meets an English journalist named Corker, who is also going to Ishmaelia but knows no more about the place than William. Corker explains the fundamentals of journalism to William, including how to interpret cryptic cables he receives from London. In Aden, William meets up again with the mysterious Englishman, and Corker searches for a story for his news agency.

Book 2: Stones £20

The narrator explains the brewing conflict in Ishmaelia, a backward place that is corruptly run by the Jackson family, with General Gollancz Jackson as president. The capital city, Jacksonburg, receives much foreign investment, little of which finds its way to the ordinary people. Six months earlier, trouble began when Smiles Soum, a lowly member of the Jackson family, quarreled with the leadership. He was perceived in London's liberal circles as a fascist, and support poured in for the president. Journalists flocked to the country, as war seemed imminent.

At the Hotel Liberty, a celebrated American journalist, Wenlock Jakes, is working on a book on English political and social life. There are journalists from many countries at the hotel, including the Englishmen Shumble, Whelper, Pigge, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, William, and Corker. The journalists are under pressure from their newspapers to cable a story, but little is happening. Eventually, Shumble makes up a story that a Russian spy has arrived disguised as a railway official. The story is treated as a world scoop but is soon killed by a chorus of denials.

William meets an old friend from school, Jack Bannister, at the British Consulate. Bannister tells him that there is, in fact, a Russian agent in Jacksonburg, but they do not know what he is up to. William is elated at getting such a tip-off, but Corker tells him it will not work after all the previous denials about the presence of a Russian agent.

More journalists arrive, and William moves to the Pension Dressler, run by a formidable German woman, Frau Dressler. There he meets Kätchen, a young German woman who is temporarily separated from her husband. They strike up a friendship, and she persuades him to buy her husband's collection of stones, which he later finds out is gold ore.

The journalists fall to quarreling amongst themselves, and then they all go on a trek to a place called Laku, where they have been led to believe there is some action. Laku, in fact, does not exist.

William receives instructions from his newspaper to remain in Jacksonburg. He is now the only correspondent left there, but he fails to send any news stories. The *Beast* office in London gets increasingly impatient with him and sends him a cable telling him he has been fired. Meanwhile, William has fallen in love with Kätchen. Kätchen persuades him to pay her to get news for him, since she knows some important people. She later informs him that the president has been locked up in his own palace, and William sends a cable with his first news item. The delighted *Beast* reinstates him.

At the British Legation, Bannister explains the political situation to William. He reveals that the Germans are backing the rebellion of Smiles, but the Russians are supporting the communist Young Ishmaelite Party. There is likely to be a communist-inspired coup, followed by a dictatorship. This is another scoop for William.

Kätchen's husband returns, as does Kätchen, who has been imprisoned because her papers were not in order. William is full of regret at losing her, but he cooperates in an escape plan. The two Germans escape down the river by using a canoe that William brought with him in his luggage.

When William returns from seeing them off, he discovers that the Young Ishmaelite Party has taken over the government, the Jacksons have been imprisoned, and a Soviet state has been declared.

As William despairs over his loss of Kätchen, the mysterious Englishman reappears, by parachute. He likes to be called Mr. Baldwin, and it turns out that he is a savvy businessman who has a large financial interest in Ishmaelia and has been manipulating events to his advantage. He explains the political situation, giving William yet another scoop, and then arranges a quick counterrevolution that topples the day-old Soviet state. President Jackson is reinstated. Mr. Baldwin then writes William's story for him and cables it to the *Beast*.

Book 3: Banquet

Back in London, Lord Copper recommends William to the prime minister for a knighthood. But by mistake the letter informing him of this is delivered to John Courteney Boot, the novelist.

William returns to England, covered in glory because of his journalistic successes. Other newspapers woo his services, and literary agents want his autobiography. But William wants only to return to his home at Boot Magna, from where he writes to Lord Copper declining his invitation to a banquet. Mr. Salter is sent to Boot Magna to bring William back, but he has a very uncomfortable time in the country and cannot persuade William to attend the banquet. The situation is saved when William's uncle Theodore shows up in the offices of the *Beast*, and it is agreed that he will be passed off as William Boot. At the banquet, Lord Copper goes along with the deception. Back at Boot Magna, William is free to continue writing his nature columns, which is all he ever wanted to do.

Book 1, Part 1

Book 1, Part 1 Summary

The Scoop is a satire about the newspaper industry and the profession of journalism. The author, Evelyn Waugh, pokes fun at the people and the processes that form the operations of the Fourth Estate all over the world. The novel begins with the introduction of an author named John CourteneyCourtney Boot who has just published his eighth book in a career that shows much promise. Boot is well traveled and lives a privileged life in London and counts many privileged society people as his friends. On this particular day, Boot plans to visit one of these friends, Mrs. Julia Stitch, whom he trusts for advice on personal and business matters.

Boot arrives at the Stitch household in time to pass Mr. Stitch, who is an English cabinet minister, leaving for the office. The butler shows Boot to Mrs. Stitch's bedroom where she is still in bed but engaged in all sorts of industrious tasks. Mrs. Stitch's face is caked in a clay mask and she acknowledges Boot with her eyes as she interacts with her maid, her daughter, Josephine, and a young painter who is creating images of ruined castles on the room's ceiling.

Mrs. Stitch invites Boot to accompany her to a new rug shop in the city and the two climb into the woman's tiny car and head off. The size of the car and Mrs. Stitch's position of privilege allow the woman to take liberties in traffic, even driving on the sidewalk when impeded by traffic jams. Boot takes the opportunity to share with Mrs. Stitch that he is looking for a diplomatic position in order to escape the country because his American girlfriend is driving him crazy. Mrs. Stitch suggests a position as a foreign correspondent with *The Daily Beast* newspaper that Boot thinks is a wonderful idea and Mrs. Stitch promises to use her influence to secure the position.

At lunch later that day Mrs. Stitch is able to convince Lord Copper, the head of the Megalopolitan Newspaper Corporation, that he should hire Boot to cover the conflict in Ishmaelia, East Africa. Lord Copper thinks this is a good idea as Boot is a well-traveled, successful author and passes the word on to the Foreign Editor at the paper who makes the mistake of confusing John Boot with an obscure rural columnist named William Boot.

The Foreign Editor and the Managing Editor are perplexed about why Lord Copper would send this low profile writer to cover a war but send a telegram to William Boot on their employer's orders.

Book 1, Part 1 Analysis

The author establishes the sometimes-ludicrous inefficiencies of the news industry immediately in this first section. Ironically, two of the principal managers of this important London newspaper do not investigate the identity of the rural columnist

William Boot to distinguish him from the author, John Boot, who is the person intended for the foreign correspondent assignment. The decision is made because the Prime Minister likes rural topics and that must by why Lord Copper has made the decision to hire Boot. The tone for the novel is set for satire that will continue to extend throughout the story.

Book 1, Part 2

Book 1, Part 2 Summary

William Boot resides in the country at a rundown estate called Boot Magna Hall that is filled with eccentric relatives and a dwindling family fortune. On this morning William waits anxiously with his two uncles for the arrival of the *The Daily Beast* in order to see if his most recent column has made it to print. Last week's column was printed with errors due to the interference of his aunt who made changes to William's copy without his knowledge. The resulting article created much embarrassment for William along with a stack of letters from irate readers.

The sight of his column in the paper today is an indication that William has escaped retribution and that he can continue with his journalistic career. William's relief is short lived however as the arrival of a telegram from Lord Copper demanding William's immediate appearance at the newspaper office in London. William takes the London train the next morning, fully expecting to be fired for the unfortunate incident of last week's column. William meets with Mr. Salter. The two men are uncomfortable, one for thinking his career is about to end, the other because he knows nothing about agriculture or the country and cannot think of anything to say.

Ultimately Mr. Salter is able to assuage William's worries about being fired and tells William that Lord Cooper wants William to be the newspaper's foreign correspondent covering the war in Ishmaelia. William has never been away from home and has no desire to start now and prepares to leave for the train to take him back to Boot Magna Hall. It is only after Mr. Salter informs William that Lord Cooper does not tolerate disloyalty in any way and that a refusal of service could be grounds for dismissal does William agree to continue the discussion with Mr. Salter about the Ishmaelia assignment.

Book 1, Part 2 Analysis

The author provides more information about the unsuspecting William Boot whose simple life has in no way prepared him for what is about to come into his life. William is comfortable with structure and minimal disruption and until the meeting with Mr. Salter has never even met anyone from *The Daily Beast.* The stage is set for more comedy at the expense of the unwitting William.

Book 1, Part 3

Book 1, Part 3 Summary

After spending the night in a fine hotel paid for by *The Daily Beast*, William is urged on by the hotel staff to a scene down the street where a woman has driven her small black car down a set of steps. William arrives to find none other than Mrs. Stitch, who William considers to be the most beautiful woman he has ever seen, entertaining the press and local authorities. The car is lifted to the road by a group of men and Mrs. Stitch drives off waving to the throng of people.

Mr. Salter finds William in the crowd of people and whisks him back to the newspaper to his appointment with Lord Copper. Ensconced in plush surroundings, it is clear that Lord Copper is almost as much in awe of William as William is of him. Lord Copper informs William of his duties and the type of news the paper expects from William's coverage. Lord Copper tries to explain the political ramifications of the war but William does not grasp the big picture or any of the subtleties.

Soon it is time for William to leave so Lord Copper ushers him out and instructs William to get his kit taken care of. William takes full advantage of the amenities available for stocking his travel kit and selects such items as a typewriter, an over furnished tent, linen suits, Christmas decorations and a humidor. William arrives at the airport excited to be taking his first plane ride and watches as his baggage and trunks are securely loaded. It is only when an agent asks for William's passport that the trip is stalled for lack of the appropriate documents.

Book 1, Part 3 Analysis

The author paints a vivid picture of the pomposity of large newspapers and their owners in this section. Lord Copper is ensconced in plush carpets and fine fabrics and is not interested in the truth in William's reporting but rather wants William to report on what will be popular with readers and the political cronies of Lord Copper. Mr. Salter's obsequiousness and lack of a grasp of foreign affairs, especially since he is the Foreign Editor of the paper, are just more examples of the hollow shell which makes up this news organization.

Book 1, Part 4

Book 1, Part 4 Summary

Mr. Salter is aghast at this logistical mistake of the missing passport and begs William to keep a low profile until the passport can be arranged so that Lord Copper will not be the wiser. Mr. Salter also advises William to declare that he left on time because Lord Copper will expect news coverage ahead of the competitive paper and Mr. Salter does not want Lord Copper to find out that William is behind schedule by a couple of days.

In order to secure the passport, William must visit the offices of two opposing Ishmaelia delegations, an excursion which places him in the middle of more political discussions that completely go over William's head. Finally with passport and visas in hand, William boards a private plane to Paris and is asked permission for another passenger to board. William agrees and is intrigued by the stranger's secretive demeanor and lack of communication. The same man is also on the same train with William from Paris to Marseilles and the man thanks William for sharing the plane ride and offers his assistance to William at any time. The next morning the strange man has left the train before William has had a chance to say goodbye.

Book 1, Part 4 Analysis

The stranger on the plane and subsequent train ride is intriguing to William but William has no true journalistic instincts and does not even inquire about the man's identity. The man is an important figure and his offer to re-pay William's kindness someday is important to note. This section continues to expose the misplaced energies of those running the newspaper. There is much effort and expense in outfitting William for the trip to Ishmaelia but the basic international item of a passport is completely missed. The author sets the tone for poor William's misadventures in this unfortunate example of foreshadowing.

Book 1, Part 5

Book 1, Part 5 Summary

The misadventures with the passport set William's travel schedule back so that the best boats sailing to Ishmaelia have already left leaving William to board the *Francmacon*, a dilapidated ship filled with other stragglers and odd characters. William explains his mission as a journalist to some of the other passengers but none seem to really understand what the war in Ishmaelia is about other than some "niggers" fighting about something.

One of the passengers who knows just as little about the war as William is another English reporter named Corker. Corker works for the Universal News service which provides stories to many newspapers including *The Beast*, a fact which takes William off guard. Although Corker and William are competitors for the same stories, the two men begin a friendship and are glad to have someone from home along on this trip to Africa. Corker even explains the mechanics of the business of journalism to the neophyte William.

William notices that the stranger from the Paris plane trip and the Marseilles train ride is also on board this ship. The stranger recognizes William and the two men strike up a brief conversation in which the stranger reveals that he is on the way to Ishmaelia for some sun and warmth. After the stranger departs, Corker asks about the man's identity and William still does not know his name. The ship's passengers have a two-night stay in Aden to await the little boat, which will take them on to Africa. William and Corker take advantage of the shopping, particularly Corker who is a collector and buys many collectibles and treasures to ship back to England for his wife.

Meanwhile, back in London, John Boot arrives at the ball hosted by the Duchess of Stayle in hopes of seeing Mrs. Stitch. After a search which consumes most of the evening, Boot finally finds Mrs. Stitch who is surprised to see the young man who she thinks has shipped off to cover the war in Ishmaelia. Boot tells Mrs. Stitch that he has not heard anything from Lord Copper and is quite unnerved by the silence, especially since Boot is keeping a low profile to avoid his American girlfriend. Mrs. Stitch briefly wonders out loud what went wrong with Boot's assignment.

Book 1, Part 5 Analysis

It is important to note that there is no such country in Africa called Ishmaelia although the author, Evelyn Waugh, does base the story on his own experiences of covering a war in Ethiopia in the mid 1930's. At that time, the foreign correspondents and reporters were held in high esteem for this glamorous position of being on the front lines of conflict all over the world. These newsmen are the forerunners to the modern day news reporters and anchors whose images and personalities are beamed all over the world

every day. Ironically, the reporters of Waugh's period as exhibited in the character of William Boot, are woefully misinformed about not only the countries and conflicts they are to cover but also about the craft of journalism itself.

Stylistically, Waugh maintains the sense of irony in the story with the appearance of the unfortunate John Boot at a ball in London when it is he who should be headed to Africa, not William Boot. Waugh also begins to paint a picture of the vacuous nature of the upper class as symbolized in Mrs. Stitch who takes her pleasure where she finds it and flits from one cause to another without much discretion. John Boot has placed his trust in her to secure the foreign correspondent position and Mrs. Stitch cannot be bothered with the details of the gross lapse in communication.

Book 2, Part 1

Book 2, Part 1 Summary

The narrator of the book provides a brief history of the political factions in Ishmaelia which provides a better understanding of the current conflict. The country is primitive at best and is not far removed from the days when cannibalism prevailed. Europeans of various descent have tried to settle it unsuccessfully and the country ultimately falls to a corrupt black family called the Jackson's, headed by General Gollancz Jackson. The country's capital city is quite naturally called Jacksonburg after the tyrannical Jackson family and much foreign currency flows into the city but its usage never reaches the general populace and the Jacksons become increasingly wealthier.

The corruption is revealed by a family member named Smiles Soum, a reported Fascist, who becomes the leader of the White Shirt movement designed to lead the countrymen of Ishmaelia who are tired of the abuses of the Jackson family. The Jackson family fights back and money flows in from political supporters in London in an attempt to crush the White Shirts. Newspapers send reporters to the anxious little country and it is decided that a war will ensue after the August rains abate.

One of the reporters in Jacksonburg is the noted American journalist, Wenlock Jakes, who is working on a book about the undercurrents of English political and social life. In an adjacent room at the Hotel Liberty, there are four French reporters who seem to be dressed for a social engagement rather than for war coverage. In another room are residing three reporters named Shumble, Whelper and Pigge who are special correspondents also covering the imminent war. An English reporter, Mr. Pappenhacker from the *Twopence* newspaper plays with a toy train; a veteran British reporter, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock waits with the company of liquor and there are six other unidentified reporters in this particular hotel just waiting the onset of the war.

The afternoon train and the possibility of mail rouses the reporters who make their way to the station in anticipation of news. William and Corker are also on this particular train having spent many distressing days traveling to the remote location. Shumble, Whelper and Pigge know Corker and exchange pleasantries with him upon his arrival at the station and the men gauge the importance of the mission based on the reporters represented.

The pressure mounts from all the representative newspapers for their reporters to provide some news but there is nothing to report as yet, other than some local color stories. Soon a rumor circulates that Shumble has a story and the other reporters are mad with envy and try to get Shumble to reveal the information but Shumble will not say anything and is careful to wire his story at a time when there are no other reporters around. Shumble's story comes to light the next day as it is shared that a Russian spy has arrived in the town under the persona of a railroad official. The Minister of Foreign

Affairs and Propaganda denies this information and the reporters wire their respective newspapers that the information about a spy is false.

William has dinner at the villa of Jack Bannister and the two men engage in a discussion of Ishmaelia politics and the topic of Shumble's story arises. Bannister reveals that there is a Russian in Jacksonburg but he did not arrive disguised, on the train. The man is actually living at the home of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Bannister suggests there is the possibility of a good news story there. William returns to the hotel, wakes Corker and shares the news about the Russian. Corker is not interested but William thinks this may be an item of some significance for Europe but Corker thinks it is a dead lead. In his room at the Hotel Liberty, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock covers the keyhole of his room, turns on a small lamp and pins a small flag on a map, which indicates the primitive terrain of a city called Laku. He then retires for the evening.

Book 2, Part 1 Analysis

The author uses ridiculous-sounding names for some of the characters to emphasize their bumbling antics. Shumble, Whelper and Pigge are the most prominent examples of journalistic inefficiency and their names indicate their eager but unrefined characteristics. The integrity of the journalism profession is not portrayed positively by the characters who want only to keep their jobs by providing colorful stories which will be received positively by their bosses. There is no real sense of concern or even a passing interest in the machinations of the war building outside the Hotel Liberty and the men wait for the news to come to them on the train. Although unethical in journalistic practice, at least Shumble has some initiative to at least create a story that may garner some interest and get coverage.

The competition between the reporters is intense and what passes for professional friendships is actually a very cutthroat web of relationships. The secretive vignette of Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock in the dimly lit hotel room foreshadows some undercover activity in which the veteran reporter hopes to best his colleagues. The author wants the reader to understand that veracity takes a back seat to winning and being the first with a story of mass appeal, even if the story is fictitious.

Book 2, Part 2

Book 2, Part 2 Summary

William and Corker meet one of the Swedish reporters at a canteen while en route to check for their lost baggage at the train station. The Swede informs William and Corker about the presence of a Russian spy in the city but William and Corker tell their Swedish colleague that that information is not true. The men are interrupted by the entrance of a young German girl whom the Swede reveals as a tenant at the German hotel, Pension Dressler. The girl buys something but never says a word before leaving.

Fifty more reporters have arrived on today's train and William ends up sharing his room with some of them who take advantage of his cots and another accoutrements, which finally arrived on the train. The cramped quarters at the now overflowing Hotel Liberty push William to check out and move into the Pension Dressler where he is given the nicest room, which had been used by the quiet German girl he had seen a few days ago. The Pension Dressler is run by Frau Dressler, a large, energetic German woman who has lived in Jacksonburg for fifteen years and knows the workings of the city and its government officials and enjoys hosting journalists and other people whom she considers of importance.

As William begins to unpack his things, the German girl enters to retrieve some of her belongings, which had been accidentally left in the room. William learns the girl's name is Katchen and is awaiting the return of her engineer husband who left six weeks before, vowing he would return. Katchen, desperate for money in order to remain at the hotel, convinces William to buy a bag of her husband's rock specimens for twenty pounds. William dutifully records the expenditure in his expense log.

The journalists in town learn of new activity at a town called Laku and make preparations to depart to cover the action. Before they leave, the reporters must attend a meeting of the Foreign Press Association so that travel and other diplomatic issues might be explained. The Association's representative tells the journalists that passes will be supplied which will allow their safe travel to the interior region of the country in order to reach Laku.

William receives a cable from *The Daily Beast* telling him to "Unproceed Lakuward." William stays and is the only reporter to remain in Jacksonburg while the others move forward to Laku, a place the others will discover does not actually exist.

Katchen takes advantage of the money from William and has made a visit to the beauty salon and has purchased a new dress to lift her spirits. Katchen convinces William to ask Frau Dressler to prepare a picnic, during which William admits his love for Katchen. This is the first time in twenty-three years William has been in love and he revels in this strange feeling far away from home.

Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock prepares to leave Ishmaelia and wires his newspaper that the story here is over. The paper immediately dispatches Hitchcock on to another assignment. Hitchcock has no interest in writing local color stories and is pleased to be leaving.

The next day, Katchen tells William that Frau Dressler is still angry because her rent is overdue. William probes a little bit into Katchen's situation and finds that Katchen has not been married in a church, or even in a government ceremony, to the man she calls her husband although she declares herself this man's wife. The man actually has another wife in Germany. The German consulate will not register her for this reason, which is another weapon in Frau Dressler's arsenal of dislike for the girl. At the same time, twelve miles out of town, Corker and Pigge share a meager breakfast in a tent, on the road to Laku and lament their awful luck of having their carriage mired in mud. All of their servants have passed out from drunken revelry the night before.

William makes plans to meet an old friend named Jack Bannister who invites him to a tea party at the British Consulate, which will be held in a few days. William asks if Katchen may accompany him. Jack does not think Katchen's appearance will be welcome at a government event; however, he invites William to come to another dinner and bring Katchen along.

William returns to his room feeling obligated to send some sort of cable to *The Daily Beast* about the improvements in the weather in Ishmaelia. Back in London, Mr. Salter receives the telegram and is outraged at William's weather report cable instead of providing some news of substance on the war. The other executives at the paper cannot understand why William has not responded to all their cables, the most recent one from Lord Copper himself.

The next night William and Katchen go to the Hotel Liberty for a drink and the proprietor hands William a stack of telegrams whichtelegrams that had come for him over the last several days. William's change of hotel residence apparently had not been communicated to the editors of *The Daily Beast* and the telegrams indicate a growing impatience for William to produce some news of consequence for the newspaper. Katchen senses William's despair at this professional disaster and offers to work as his assistant to sniff out news for the sum of two hundred dollars each week. Apparently Katchen knows many people in the town and can quite easily provide leads for William, in order to restore his reputation. William's gratitude extends beyond professional bounds and William asks Katchen to marry him, but she evades the question and runs to her room.

Book 2, Part 2 Analysis

The author dedicates a good portion of this section to William's naivety and the fact that he is completely unprepared to take on this reporting job. Luckily William's colleague, Corker, is willing to instruct William in the basics, but only after it is determined that William and Corker are not in any competitive situation. William fails to grasp the

concept of the urgency of the news business and his passive nature allows him to amble around town instead of digging for news. Even William's inability to properly read a telegram inhibits his work as he misinterprets directions from *The Daily Beast.*

Williams' gullibility extends to his personal life too where he quickly falls in love with the mysterious German girl, Katchen, who takes advantage of William's sweet nature to extract money. The money is not William's but actually comes from the newspaper and he justifies the allotments as business expenses.

Throughout the novel, the author continues the satire on the journalism industry with all the bumbling characters and their missteps, especially the trek en masse of all the foreign correspondents to the imaginary town of Laku where there is supposed to be much war action. There is no investigation of the town or its importance to the war made by any of these reporters who are herded, as if they are sheep, instead of taking the proactive position for which they have been dispatched.

Book 2, Part 3

Book 2, Part 3 Summary

The next morning William discovers that Katchen has gone out shopping and the city is on holiday to celebrate the end of the rainy season. William ventures into town to discover that a Swedish reporter has been dispatched to a remote part of the country, down river, to cover a cholera outbreak.

Katchen returns from shopping and tells William she has news that President Jackson has been locked in his bedroom by the Foreign Affairs Minister, and that a mysterious Russian and two black men recently arrived from America. Katchen has talked to the Jackson family governess who is concerned that something is seriously wrong. William is encouraged by the prospect of being able to provide some substantive news; however, Katchen is in the mood for a drive.

William promises Katchen that they can enjoy themselves as soon as he sends a wire to *The Daily Beast* with the news of the overthrow of the government. William sits down and begins, for the first time in his life, to craft a journalistic piece. He begins typing the story with one finger. Frau Dressler interrupts William with a cable from *The Daily Beast* telling him he has been terminated for his lack of performance in Ishmaelia. William does not know how to break the news about his job loss to Katchen and decides to send the wire about President Jackson's captivity in spite of his recent termination.

Corker and Pigge are still stuck in the mud twelve miles outside the city where there is no traffic and the only other people around are the servants who are once again passed out from having drunk too much the night before. Later that afternoon William attends the party at the British Legation where William's old friend, Jack Bannister, explains the local political scenario to the napve William. According to Jack, the Germans are funding the White Shirt rebellion led by Smiles, while the Russians back the Young Ishmaelite Party of communist infiltrators. Jack shares with William that there is a strong possibility of a communist coup with a resulting dictatorship and hopes that William can use the information for a news article.

The Foreign Minister is also in attendance at the party and tries to strong arm William into taking a pre-arranged trip out of the city at the government's expense. William's obstinate refusal to leave fires the Minister's wrath who vows retribution. Jack tells William that the government wants William out of the way for what may transpire politically over the next few days. The other reporters staying in the town have unwittingly all gone away to the imaginary Laku while William remained in town.

Arriving back at his hotel, William finds a telegram from *The Daily Beast* reversing William's termination and congratulating him on the story about Jackson's imprisonment. Frau Dressler informs William that Katchen has been taken away by some soldiers this morning and is being held at the Postmaster General's home. Frau

Dressler also tells William there is a man waiting to see him in the hotel's dining room. William finds a young Negro man who has come to change William's mind about leaving the city on the trip so graciously extended by the Foreign Minister. William once again refuses to listen, and asks about Katchen. He is told that she is being well taken care of.

The young man has also come for the bag of rocks which Katchen has told the government officials now belong to William. The young man offers to buy the rocks from William, who refuses this as well. On the way out, the young man is upended by Frau Dressler's milk goat and ends up with his pompous face buried in the kitchen garbage outside the hotel. William takes the rocks to Jack Bannister who confirms that the stones are gold ore and therefore very valuable to whoever can gain ownership. William writes the story of the Russian plot to overthrow the Jackson regime and dispatches it to *The Daily Beast,* which runs the article as five full columns alongside a picture of William on the first page of the next edition.

William returns home with grand images in his head about bringing down the pompous Foreign Minister and ultimately having Katchen return to him in relief and unconditional love. These dreams are dashed when William is confronted by a German man, who had been hiding in William's hotel room. He claimed to be Katchen's long lost husband. William feeds the exhausted German, who then falls asleep. After bribing a servant working at the postmaster general's villa where she had been imprisoned, Katchen escapes and arrives back at William's hotel. Katchen is overjoyed to see her husband and it becomes clear to William he has lost Katchen for good.

The only thing William can do for Katchen now is to help her and her husband escape before the Communist uprising. Katchen remembers the collapsible canoe from William's provisions and she and her husband set off down the river toward the French border, promising to send William money for the canoe as soon as they arrive to safety. Crestfallen, William returns from launching Katchen and her husband down the river and writes another dispatch and sends it with a runner, who returns saying the wire has been shut down. William heads to the telegraph office himself and finds the pompous young Negro man who had previously tried to coerce William to leave town.

The young man tells William the wireless is down and can be used only for government business and that William would have been wise to have left town when encouraged to do so a few days ago. William leaves the telegraph office and sees workers all over town implementing Russian signage as a sure sign of the confidence of the imminent coup.

Not long after William returns to the hotel, there is a great commotion and much interest from a parachutist who lands deftly on the roof as Frau Dressler swears retribution should there be any damage caused. To William's delight, the man just fallen from the sky is the mysterious stranger from William's plane and train rides at the onset of his trip to Ishmaelia. The stranger recognizes William and is pleased to see another Englishman in Ishmaelia. As it turns out the stranger, who likes to be called Mr. Baldwin, although that is not his true name, is a wealthy businessman who has indirectly

furthered William's career as a re-payment for William's kindness on the plane and train rides in France a few weeks previously.

Mr. Baldwin admits that William did not seem like a foreign correspondent when he first met him and secretly feared that William had another motive for coming to Ishmaelia. Mr. Baldwin invites William to lunch at his pied a terre and apologizes in advance for the limited provisions, which to William's palate, are the most gourmet dishes he has eaten since leaving England. Mr. Baldwin also offers William the use of a private telegraph so that William may send his wires to *The Daily Beast* without interruption.

Mr. Baldwin also explains the Ishmaelia political situation to William who is woefully under informed for being a foreign correspondent. Mr. Baldwin is part owner of the mineral rights of Ishmaelia and there has been much competition for the rights lately. Both the Germans and the Russians have made offers but the commodities offered by the countries were not items of big demand in Ishmaelia. President Jackson was also interested in the mineral rights for his retirement provisions and Mr. Baldwin was able to make a deal with the Ishmaelian president. Neither Russia nor Germany wanted to concede the opportunity to the rights so the plan was to depose President Jackson. The Germans planted Mr. Smiles as their anticipated leader and The Russians exerted their influence through the Young Ishmaelite Party, which is currently taking over the country.

William is grateful for the background information, which will serve as the basis for his next dispatch to the paper. Baldwin chastises William for not prompting him for a message for the British public, which will find a place in the news. Baldwin's message is that *might* must find a way, not *force.* Mr. Baldwin hopes that sending this message to the paper's readership will help to avoid any major conflicts.

The Swedish reporter who had been exiled to cover the cholera epidemic returns and tells William and Mr. Baldwin that the epidemic had been a ruse in an attempt to get all journalists out of the city for the uprising. William, the Swede, and Mr. Baldwin make their way to the Presidential palace and manage to initiate an uprising which ultimately brings down the newly-formed Soviet revolution in Ishmaelia. An hour later, as William crafts his next dispatch to the paper the sounds of celebration are heard in the city streets. President Jackson has been freed from his captors and rides on the shoulders of the people who are joyous that their old government and way of life have been reinstated. William in interrupted by Mr. Baldwin, who offers to craft William's article in a way that Lord Copper will find most agreeable by pointing out that British interests in the gold mines has been secured.

Book 2, Part 3 Analysis

Truth in journalism, or rather, the lack of truth in journalism, is an important theme in this novel. Everything related to the foreign correspondents seems to be a sham of some sort. William is not the Mr. Boot originally intended for the war assignment. Mr. Baldwin's identity is kept a secret until this point in the story. The insurgent political factions fabricate war activity as a ruse to lure the journalists to a town which does not even

exist to eliminate news coverage of their imminent activities. The Swede is sent out of town to cover a trumped up cholera epidemic. Even the stories wired back to respective newspapers are fabricated in order to meet deadlines instead of true news objectives.

The author does not hide his opinion of these foreign correspondents as bumbling and lazy, and twice makes note of Corker and Pigge, whose vehicle stays mired in mud for days while their servants are passed out drunk. These two supposedly brilliant minds cannot find their way out of a mud hole and the scenarios are intended to be both humorous and illuminating. The author makes it very clear in this section that the true power of the press is the political and economic powers behind it. Mr. Baldwin symbolizes the big business angle of the politically connected machine that runs all institutions including major newspapers. Baldwin uses William as a conduit for his own messages and objectives in order to manipulate events on the world stage to his own advantage. Ultimately, Baldwin holds complete control over the Ishmaelia situation, even writing William's last story so that the manipulation, disguised as a scoop, is done to Baldwin's satisfaction.

Book 3, Part 1

Book 3, Part 1 Summary

Lord Copper is happy that William is returning to London and discusses a banquet with Mr. Salter to celebrate and recognize William's achievements. The two men discuss William's next assignment to cover an all-women expedition to Antarctica. Lord Copper and Mr. Salter want to capitalize on William's popularity from the Ishmaelian coverage and especially do not want William to sign on with *The Brute*, a competitor of *The Daily Beast.* Lord Copper decides that William's recognition should also include a knighthood bestowed by the King and the Prime Minister of England.

The office of the Prime Minister receives the knighthood request and although they are not familiar with any writer named Boot, determines to proceed with a knighthood out of deference to Lord Copper. The Prime Minister's secretary sends a letter to the only Boot he knows is an author, John Boot, the friend of Mrs. Stitch.

John Boot is happy but perplexed upon receiving news of his upcoming knighthood and thanks Mrs. Stitch for her intervention on his behalf. Although Mrs. Stitch does not remember initiating this knighthood business, she plays along with John because she is always interfering and it is possible that she may have suggested the knighthood at some time.

William, while on the train home, returns from Ishmaelia and reads the front page coverage of his glorious success. There are also several telegrams from *The Daily Beast* offering William a generous salary for continued employment. There is also a wire that William's story may be made into a film or a book. This rush of undeserved attention embarrasses William who throws the telegrams out the train window in disgust.

The newspaper has sent a young intern to meet William at the train station but William has no intention of returning to the office and gives all his traveling gear and accoutrements to the young man, who is in awe of William's celebrity. He returns home to Boot Magna Hall and Mr. Salter sends a telegram announcing that he will call on William the next day. There is much activity in the eccentric Boot home while plans are made for Mr. Salter's arrival. Mr. Salter is determined to secure William's employment at the newspaper and to confirm William's presence at a banquet to be held in William's honor.

Book 3, Part 1 Analysis

The author employs the elements of humor and irony in this section as the well-intentioned newspaper execs set into motion a series of blunders. The competitive nature of the news business is foremost on their minds and their primary interest is capitalizing on William's celebrity in order to sell more papers and they also want to

secure William to prevent his accepting an employment offer with a rival paper. Ironically it is John Boot, not William, who receives the knighthood and the plum assignment to Antarctica. John is confused by the honor but welcomes the international assignment as the opportunity to avoid his clinging American girlfriend.

Book 3, Part 2

Book 3, Part 2 Summary

Mr. Salter arrives at the train station near Boot Magna Hall after a harrowing trip on a primitive train and is incredulous that there is no car waiting to drive him the rest of the way. Two servants from the Hall are to carry Mr. Salter along with some other goods they have purchased. Mr. Salter's dignity is wounded and decides to make the trip on foot. The six miles to Boot Magna Hall exhaust Mr. Salter who collapses in sleep upon reaching his destination. The quirky Boot relatives surmise that Mr. Salter is drunk and keep an eye on the port throughout the evening so that Mr. Salter will not consume any more alcohol.

William has no interest in any more high profile work preferring his rural column instead for which he accepts a lifetime contract; however, William will not attend any banquet in his honor. Mr. Salter's career is saved when William's eccentric Uncle Theodore presents himself at the office of *The Daily Beast* the next day offering his services. Since not many people would be the wiser, it is decided that Uncle Theodore will be passed off as William and Lord Copper's banquet may continue as planned.

Book 3, Part 2 Analysis

The author reinforces the theme of bending the truth in the news business. It is more important that the newspaper's reputation remain intact and that the banquet proceeds as planned rather than ferreting out the real truth about the situation. The newspaper is willing to accept an old man, Uncle Theodore, in William's place so that Lord Copper will not lose face in light of this embarrassing situation.

Book 3, Part 3

Book 3, Part 3 Summary

On the evening of the banquet, all the employees of the newspaper meet their obligations and arrive for one more of Lord Copper's dreadful dinners followed by even more dreadful speeches. Lord Copper does not know what has happened, but the man sitting next to him on the dais does not appear to be the same William Boot he had met in his office just a few weeks ago. Uncle Theodore is in his glory in his newfound position as celebrated newspaper Foreign Correspondent. Lord Copper chooses not to make an issue of the situation and recognizes Uncle Theodore for his efforts and for the brilliant coverage of the war in Ishmaelia. William remains at home at Boot Magna Hall and gazes at the moonlight flooding his beloved home and thinks about his nature column for the next edition of *The Daily Beast.*

Book 3, Part 3 Analysis

The deception is complete and the newspaper's reputation remains intact as Lord Copper chooses to ignore the obvious errors in the closure of the Boot situation. Image and mass appeal have always taken priority to the truth and that trend continues. The novel is a series of misconceptions and deceptions, perhaps exaggerated a bit, but raising the question of how deeply do those involved seek the truth in journalism? The author bases the story on his own experience in international service as a correspondent and his disdain for the people and the processes is evident. Perhaps the only salvation for the author is that William stays true to his nature and refuses to compromise himself for any deceptions, at any cost. There simply is no scoop worth a person's integrity or self- esteem.

Characters

Mr. Baldwin

Mr. Baldwin is a small, mysterious man who, with his servant, joins William on his flight to Paris. He also turns up on the train to Marseilles. Later in the novel, he parachutes in to Jacksonburg and explains to William the political maneuverings going on in the country. It appears that Baldwin, which is simply the name he prefers to be known by, is a well-connected international businessman who is out to profit personally from the turbulent situation in Ishmaelia, whilst also preserving British economic interests. He owns the mineral rights in Ishmaelia, rights that the Russian and German governments are scheming to acquire. Eventually, it is Mr. Baldwin who writes the text of the final news story that William sends to the *Beast*. In that story, Baldwin refers to himself as a "mystery financier" and compares himself favorably to two of the great Englishmen of the past, Lawrence of Arabia and Cecil Rhodes, founder of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Baldwin also arranges the counterrevolution that topples the day-old Soviet state in Ishmaelia.

Jack Bannister

Jack Bannister is a senior official in the British Legation in Ishmaelia. He is an old school friend of William Boot and passes on to him vital information about the country's political situation.

Doctor Benito

Doctor Benito is a rather sinister figure who is the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Propaganda in Ishmaelia. The journalist Pigge regards him as "creepy." Small and neatly dressed, suave and self-possessed, Benito allies himself with the Russian-backed Young Ishmaelite party and, when President Jackson is overthrown, he emerges as the new dictator. But his hold on power lasts only one day; he is toppled by the counterrevolution arranged by Mr. Baldwin.

Uncle Bernard

Uncle Bernard, one of William's uncles, spends his life conducting scholarly research on the family pedigree. Had he had more money, he would have made a claim to the vacant barony of de Butte.

Nanny Bloggs

Nanny Bloggs is William's old nanny at Boot Magna Hall.

John Courteney Boot

John Courteney Boot is a successful writer. He has written eight books, including novels, as well as travel and history books, and he is a well-known and respected name in intellectual circles. He accepts Mrs. Stitch's recommendation to become a war correspondent for the *Daily Beast* because he is desperate to get away from his American girl-friend. But there is a mix-up, and his remote cousin, William Boot, gets the coveted job. At the end of the novel, yet another bureaucratic mix-up ensures that a knighthood intended for William goes instead to John Courteney. Finally, still trying to evade his girlfriend, John Courteney Boot goes off to Antarctica as a reporter for the *Beast*.

Priscilla Boot

Priscilla Boot is William's sister. It is she who, as a joke, inserts all the references in William's article to the fictitious "great crested grebe."

William Boot

William Boot lives in the country at Boot Magna Hall, from where he writes a twice-weekly nature column for the *Daily Beast* called Lush Places. When a misunderstanding occurs, William is sent to Ishmaelia as a war correspondent, but he is a countryman and has little knowledge of the wider world. Even on the train journey to London, he makes a fool of himself, first in the dining-car, ordering whiskey when all they are serving is tea, and then in the carriage when he pays for a drink with an old sovereign, mistaking it for another coin, a shilling. Everyone stares at him.

William is an honest, good-natured man, but he is also very naïve and passive. He has no idea of how to do the job that has been assigned to him. Corker has to teach him the elements of journalism, but even then he shows himself to be an unpromising student, failing to understand the urgency with which he is required to gather news at any cost. Then he foolishly falls in love with the German woman Kätchen and allows her to exploit him for money. It is only through a series of fortuitous events that William gets the scoops that make him famous. When he returns to London, he is unprepared for the glory and renown that now accompanies him, and he turns down all manner of offers from the literary and journalistic world that would have made him rich and even more famous. All he wants is to return home to the peaceful, unchanging world in the country that he knows and loves, and it is his good fortune that another misunderstanding involving the name Boot allows him to do just that.

Lord Copper

Lord Copper is the proprietor of the Megalopolitan Newspaper Corporation. He relishes his position of power and the trappings that go along with it, and he also possesses a

grandiose sense of his own importance. This is suggested by the larger-than-life statue of him that stands in the entrance lobby of the Megalopolitan building in London's Fleet Street. Lord Copper claims that he allows his journalists to hold their own opinions, but, in truth, he has very pronounced ideas about the stories he is prepared to print. He is a powerful and ruthless man who likes to have his own way and usually succeeds in getting it. He dominates his staff, none of whom dares to contradict him, which means that Lord Copper is never made aware of the ignorance he displays on many topics. Nor does he realize that he is regarded as a bore, a fact that can be seen by the attitude of his guests at the banquet. The only person who enjoys Lord Copper's regular banquets is Lord Copper himself, largely because they give him the chance to give a long, uninterrupted after-dinner speech.

Corker

Corker is an English journalist whom William first encounters on the train to Marseilles. Gregarious, irreverent, and worldly wise, Corker is the opposite of William. Observing William's ignorance, he takes him under his wing, trying to teach him the basics of journalism. When Corker is pressed by Universal News, his news agency, to send a story, he concocts one based on the flimsiest research

Frau Dressler

Frau Dressler is a German woman who runs a hotel, the Pension Dressler, which acts as center for the Germans in Jacksonburg. Frau Dressler haslived in Africa all her life. She is a large woman with a lot of energy who drives a hard bargain with the local peasants when they sell her their wares.

Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock

Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock is a famous English journalist who travels to Ishmaelia. He hides out by himself and, because of his reputation, all the other journalists are afraid that he is working on a big story somewhere that they have missed. Hitchcock eventually concocts a fake interview with the leader of the fascists, which supposedly took place in a town called Laku, a place that does not in fact exist. This piece of disinformation sends all the other journalists off on a wild goose chase to Laku, while Sir Jocelyn returns to Europe to work on his next assignment.

Wenlock Jakes

Wenlock Jakes is the highest paid journalist in the United States; his work is syndicated all over America. However, according to Corker, Jakes's methods leave a lot to be desired, since he tends to make his stories up. He even won a Nobel Peace Prize for his courageous reporting of a revolution in the Balkans but, according to Corker, that revolution only began because Jakes's story created such an unstable situation that

within a week a revolution actually did occur. Jakes spends his time in Jacksonburg writing a book called *Under the Ermine*, a trashy exposé of English political and social life, for which has been paid a large advance by the publisher.

Kätchen

Kätchen is a young German woman who is temporarily separated from her husband and is staying at the Pension Dressler. Under her helpless exterior, Kätchen is amiably cunning, and she easily gets William, who falls in love with her, to fork over money to her from his expense account. She gets into trouble with the authorities in Ishmaelia because her immigration papers are not in order. As a result, she is briefly imprisoned. Kätchen is naïve in political matters and believes that a solution to her difficulties is to marry William. She thinks this will automatically make her a British citizen, safe from detention. Eventually, she and her returning husband escape down a river in William's canoe.

Erik Olafsen

Erik Olafsen is the resident Jacksonburg correspondent of a syndicate of Scandinavian newspapers. Lord Copper makes him become art editor for home papers. He plays many roles: he is also Swedish viceconsul, a surgeon at the hospital, and the proprietor of the Tea, Bible and Chemist shop. Olafsen is a large man with an eccentric character. He claims that he came to Ishmaelia as a refugee after he killed his grandmother in Sweden. It is Olafsen whom Mr. Baldwin chooses to put the counterrevolution into operation. The drunken Swede single-handedly routs the young Ishmaelite delegates as they listen to Doctor Benito.

Mr. Pappenhacker

Mr. Pappenhacker is the reporter for the communist newspaper *The Twopence*. He is more educated than the other journalists and tends to keep himself apart from them. He also makes a habit of being rude to waiters, since he thinks this will make them dissatisfied with the capitalist system and so hasten the communist revolution.

Pigge

Pigge is one of the English journalists in Ishmaelia.

Uncle Roderick

Uncle Roderick is the least eccentric of William's three uncles. He manages the financial affairs of the family estate and household.

Mr. Salter

Mr. Salter is the foreign editor at the *Daily Beast*. He does not like his hectic job, which he calls a "dog's life," and he knows little about foreign affairs. Nor did he like his previous job as editor of the women's page, which was much too difficult and stressful compared to the only job he really loved—the one at which he was able to choose the jokes in *Clean Fun*, one of Lord Copper's comic weeklies. However, Salter never expresses his discontent to Lord Copper. On the contrary, he is obsequious to his boss and never ventures to correct any of Lord Copper's errors or misstatements.

Mr. Salter lives an ordered, conventional life in London and regards the countryside as hostile territory. His visit to Boot Magna Hall confirms his worst impressions. He is forced to trek six miles across fields in his business suit to get there, and when he finds himself in the strange company of the Boot family, he is completely out of his depth. At the end of the novel, however, he has more luck. Lord Copper makes him become art editor for home knitting, a job he is sure to like.

Shumble is one of the English journalists in Ishmaelia. He invents a story that there is a Russian spy in the country disguised as a railway official. At first the story is treated as a scoop, and Shumble is smug and self-satisfied at his success—but then the other journalists unite to kill the story by publicizing vehement official denials.

Algernon Stitch

Algernon Stitch is the husband of Julia Stitch. He is a minister in the British cabinet.

Mrs. Julia Stitch

Mrs. Julia Stitch, wife of Algernon Stitch, is a beautiful, well-connected, society lady. She is always busy with many things, and she specializes in solving the problems of people in her circle. It is Mrs. Stitch who persuades Lord Copper to hire John Courteney Boot as war correspondent. Mrs. Stitch has one notable eccentricity: she owns a small black car and has a habit of driving it on the sidewalk in order to beat the London traffic.

Uncle Theodore

Uncle Theodore is William Boot's eccentric, old-fashioned uncle who makes frequent, disastrous visits to London. When Mr. Salter visits Boot Magna, Theodore regales him with stories that he hopes are suitable for publication in the *Beast*, although Mr. Salter falls asleep and hears none of them. When Salter wakes, he makes the mistake of telling Theodore to contact the features editor of the *Beast*, which gives Theodore another excuse to make a trip to London. Theodore is taken on by the *Daily Beast* and, in the absence of William Boot, is passed off as the famous journalist Boot at the banquet organized by Lord Copper to honor him.

Themes

Waugh wrote that his main theme was "to expose the pretensions of foreign correspondents . . . to be heroes, statesmen and diplomats." In the novel, he pokes fun at the idea that the profession of journalism is characterized by a disinterested search for the truth. On the contrary, the only concern of the journalists is to file a story that will meet with the approval of their bosses at the newspaper. The goal is to keep one step ahead of the competition, which is why the journalists behave in such an unscrupulous manner toward one another. They steal their competitors' cables and lie about anything they think will give them an advantage. For example, they all say they will be leaving for Laku at "tennish" in the morning, but in fact they are all ready to leave at dawn. The talk of leaving later was simply to try to steal a march on the opposition.

Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock appears to be a past master at tricking his rivals. In Jacksonburg, he lies low so that a rumor will start about his "disappearance." This will make his story, that he has conducted an interview with an important political leader in the town of Laku, appear plausible. In fact, Sir Jocelyn could not have done what he claims, since the town of Laku does not exist. But his fabrication serves his purpose not only of getting out of Ishmaelia, a place he does not like (having filed the story, he is free to move on to his next assignment in Europe), but also of deceiving the other reporters.

This incident highlights a point Waugh wishes to emphasize: the question of whether a particular newspaper story is true or not is a secondary consideration, ranking well behind the need to interest readers and scoop the opposition. The famous American reporter Wenlock Jakes is typical in this respect. He won his reputation partly by filing stories that he simply made up. For example, he sent an eyewitness report of the sinking of the *Lusitania* (a passenger ship that was sunk off the coast of Ireland by the Germans in World War I). The only problem with Jakes's story was that he filed it four hours before the ship was hit. Similarly, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock managed to give day-to-day reports about an earthquake in Messina without ever leaving the comfort of his desk in London. In Ishmaelia, Shumble takes a leaf out of their book by making up his own story about the presence of a Russian spy in disguise. The irony is that Shumble, although he never knows it, comes close to the truth, even though truth is not his main concern. (There really is a Russian agent in Ishmaelia, although it is not the railway official whom Shumble identifies.)

Much of the theme of the deviousness of the journalistic profession is brought out in William's interactions with Corker. When William receives his first cable from the *Beast*, he misinterprets it to mean that he should stay in Aden. Corker knows perfectly well that the cable does not mean this, but he declines to enlighten William. Only when Corker discovers that he and William are not rivals after all—since the *Beast* is accepting Corker's Universal News agency stories as well as William's—does he let William in on the secrets of the cryptic cables they receive.

When Corker is pressured by his agency to file a story about reactions in Ishmaelia to a proposed international police force, Corker's methods are revealing. He asks just one

person, Mrs. Earl Russell Jackson, who runs the hotel where he is staying. She completely misunderstands the question, but that does not stop Corker from inventing a story that the women of Ishmaelia are opposed to an interventionist police force.

It is Corker again who sets William straight about how the newspaper business is run. After Shumble's false story about the Russian spy, William suggests that they simply explain that the story was a mistake. But Corker tells him that such behavior would be "unprofessional"; newspapers do not like printing denials, since too many denials might lead the public to mistrust what they read; besides, it makes it look as if the reporters were not doing their job properly. Instead, Corker assures William that all the journalists must now find a Russian spy, whether he exists or not, so they can keep their newspapers abreast of the breaking story (which, of course, is not really a story at all). The way the process works seems to ensure that the real truth is unlikely to come out.

Style

Satire

Satire is literature that diminishes its subject by ridiculing it. A satire can evoke reactions such as amusement, contempt, or scorn. It can be aimed at an individual, a group of people, an institution, or a whole nation. The object of Waugh's satire is the entire newspaper industry, from the proprietor Lord Copper to the editors in Fleet Street and the foreign correspondents in the field.

An example of Waugh's method can be seen in the incident Lord Copper relates, in which he and his star reporter Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock quarreled over the date of the Battle of Hastings, as a result of which Hitchcock left the *Beast* for the *Brute*. The Battle of Hastings, when the invading Normans defeated the army of the Anglo-Saxon King Harold, took place in England in 1066. The date 1066 is known by every English schoolchild, but not, apparently, by England's most famous foreign correspondent. The incident suggests that Hitchcock is ignorant beyond imagination, and also implies that this kind of juvenile dispute is the level on which the newspaper business in Fleet Street is conducted. Even the titles of the newspapers, the *Beast* and the *Brute*, are satiric, mocking their pretensions to be the purveyors of news, information, and culture. Mr. Salter, the *Beast's* foreign editor, is almost as ignorant as Copper's view of Hitchcock. He cannot find Reykjavik on a map, nor can anyone else in his office. He is ill read, never having heard of the well-known novelist John Courteney Boot, and neither he nor the *Beast's* managing editor has the knowledge or ability to judge a writer's style, which is why they both think that William Boot's absurd, high-flown effort, "Feather-footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole" is an example of good style.

Farce

Satire is usually distinguished from farce. Whereas satire may have a serious purpose in exposing vice or folly and pointing the way to something better, farce is comedy pure and simple. It is designed to make people laugh, using unusual situations or improbable events. Farce often makes use of physical humor such as slapstick or horseplay; it may also use practical jokes.

There are many farcical episodes in the novel. One of the funniest is when the aggressive goat at the Pension Dressler finally breaks the rope that fetters her and sends Dr. Benito's pompous emissary, who has just boasted to William that he was a college welterweight boxing champion, sprawling in the garbage.

Other examples of farce are the series of improbable events due to misunderstandings, such as the confusion over the two (and later three) Boots; the entry of Olafsen in a drunken frenzy to end the revolution almost before it has begun; the journalists' trek to a

place that doesn't exist; and Salter's calamitous trek over six miles of country to Boot Magna Hall.

Farce is evident in the dialogue, too, as when Salter and William, when they first meet, talk at cross-purposes and so cannot communicate at all. William is expecting to be fired, while Salter has been instructed to offer him a job. To make matters worse, Salter has been given erroneous ideas about suitable topics of conversation when meeting a man from the country.

There is more farce nearer the end of the novel, when Salter is forced to travel to Boot Magna Hall. The Boots not only make the mistake of thinking that he walked the six miles from the railway station out of choice, but they also leap to the conclusion that his disheveled appearance is because of drunkenness. So, during dinner, when all the poor man needs to boost his flagging spirits is a little alcoholic refreshment, they refuse to give him anything other than water.

Historical Context

The Italo-Ethiopian War

The setting and many of the details in the novel derive from the historical situation in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1935 and 1936. Waugh covered the war as a foreign correspondent for the *Daily Mail*.

Italy invaded Ethiopia in October 1935. The pretext was an incident on the border between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. The Italians had superior weaponry and captured the capital city, Addis Ababa—Jacksonburg in the novel—in 1936. Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini proclaimed Italy's king Victor Emmanuel III emperor of Ethiopia. (In *Scoop*, the name of would-be dictator Dr. Benito is a deliberate reminder of Benito Mussolini.) The League of Nations opposed the Italian intervention but took only ineffective measures to end it. Britain had a stake in the region, but the other great European powers did not (unlike in the novel, where Britain, Germany, and Russia are all involved). The Italo-Ethiopian war, with its evidence that at least one of the totalitarian powers of Europe (the other was Nazi Germany) had imperialistic designs, contributed to the tensions that led up to World War II in 1939.

In *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936), Waugh reported on his role as a journalist covering the conflict and offered his cautious support of the Italian intervention.

In 1936, civil war broke out in Spain, in which the nationalist, fascist forces of General Franco attempted to overthrow a socialist government. The socialists received much support from leftist intellectuals in England, some of whom, like George Orwell, even went to Spain to fight against Franco. In the Preface to *Scoop*, Waugh pointed out that, in his plot, he tried to combine elements from the Italo-Ethiopian war with some details drawn from the Spanish civil war. The Spanish element can be seen in the playful description of the government of Ishmaelia as "liberal and progressive" and in the names of some of its leaders. General Gollancz Jackson, for example, is intended to remind readers of Victor Gollancz, a left-wing publisher in England. When conflict breaks out, the Ishmaelian rebels are presented, like Franco's forces, as fascists. And the besieged government wins much support in left-wing circles in England: "In a hundred progressive weeklies and Left Study Circles the matter was taken up and the cause of the Jacksons restarted in ideological form." This passage could equally serve as a description of how the left in England rallied to the cause of the Spanish socialists.

Franco's fascists were victorious in 1939.

Foreign Correspondents

The 1930s were the heyday of the glamorous newspaper foreign correspondent, both in the United States and Britain. In the days before television, these were the men (and, in a few cases, women) who informed the public about the course of events in the trouble

spots of the world. In the United States, the foreign correspondent fulfilled an important function because, at the time, the political landscape was dominated by isolationist thinking. As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. writes of these correspondents, "[T]heir ardent dispatches brought home to Americans the personalities, ambitions, intrigues, and dangers that were putting the planet on the slippery slope into the Second World War."

Among the most famous American correspondents were John Gunther, Vincent Sheean, Raymond Gram Swing, Dorothy Thompson, Edgar Snow, Harold Isaacs, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, and H. R. Knickerbocker. The latter was the model for Wenlock Jakes in *Scoop*. Knickerbocker was a Pulitzer Prize winner who during his career covered nearly every war front in the world, including the Italo-Ethiopian war, which he covered for Hearst International. He and Waugh struck up a cordial relationship there but quarreled over a remark Knickerbocker made and even came to blows over it.

Gunther, who was head of the *Chicago Daily News* bureau in Vienna in the early 1930s, and who was later transferred to London, wrote in his book *Inside U.S.A*. (quoted by Schlesinger) that the 1930s

were the bubbling, blazing days of American foreign correspondence in Europe....Most of us traveled steadily, met constantly, exchanged information, caroused, took in each other 's washing, and, even when most fiercely competitive, were devoted friends....We were scavengers, buzzards, out to get the news, no matter whose wings got clipped.

One of the famous British correspondents was F. A. Voigt. In the 1920s and early 1930s, he was Berlin correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. His reporting angered the German authorities, and on one occasion in the early 1920s he was kidnapped; a wall around him was sprayed with bullets, but he escaped. Later, Voigt wrote fearlessly about the menace of Hitler's Nazi Party and had to leave Berlin hurriedly for Paris when Hitler came to power in 1933. Even then he continued to write in opposition to Hitler. Voigt's friends and colleagues used to say that he would rather be burned at the stake than be frightened off a story—an attitude that typified the foreign correspondent in the public mind, although such a glamorous view of the profession was not shared by Waugh, as *Scoop* makes abundantly clear.

A Scoop in Ethiopia

During the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935-1936, there was one of the most famous journalistic scoops of the century. An Englishman named F. W. Rickett, negotiating on behalf of an American oil company, secured a huge oil and mineral concession from the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie. Rickett (who is the original on which the character Mr. Baldwin in the novel is based) gave the information exclusively to three journalists, including Sir Percival Phillips of the *Daily Telegraph*. (Phillips is the model for Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock in *Scoop*.)

Waugh missed out on the scoop because, like the crowd of journalists in *Scoop*, he had been out of Addis Ababa chasing another story. The *Daily Mail* was not pleased with his performance and cabled him, "Badly left oil concession suggest your return Addis immediately."

Critical Overview

Scoop was well received by critics on publication in 1938, and this confirmed Waugh's reputation as a writer of humorous and effective satire on whatever subject he chose. Everyone agreed that the novel was amusing and entertaining. The anonymous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, for example, praised Waugh's "ribald wit" that "spurts in a brisk uninterrupted flow upon the caprices of sensational journalism." But the reviewer also found that the character William Boot "is too much the simpleton, too facile an instrument for satire," and he thought it fitting that the knighthood at the end should go to John Boot rather than to William.

Novelist John Brophy, in an appreciative review in the *Daily Telegraph*, commented that Waugh as a writer was extremely good at making people laugh. But this alone did not make him a satirist, "for indignation founded on some belief is necessary to satire, and I have never been able from his books to discover what Mr. Waugh believes in."

In the *Spectator*, Derek Verschoyle declared *Scoop* to be an "enchanting book," admiring the calm way in which Waugh demolishes his satirical targets, without "surprise, sentiment or resentment." Verschoyle picked out the depiction of the Boot family as the highlight of the book: "[it] reveals an inventive power which it is little exaggeration to call that of genius."

Since its positive initial reception, however, *Scoop* has not usually been ranked with the very best of Waugh's achievements. It often takes a back seat to Waugh's earlier satires of the 1930s, especially *Vile Bodies* and *Black Mischief*. However, with the general reader, *Scoop* has been and remains one of Waugh's most popular novels.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, Aubrey shows how Scoop *arose from Waugh's experiences as a journalist in Abyssinia in 1935.*

When Waugh writes of the ingenious but unethical feats of the likes of Wenlock Jakes and Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, the reader might be forgiven for thinking that he exaggerates just a little for the sake of being satirical. After all, how could a reputable journalist write an eyewitness report of a revolution in a Balkan country that had not yet happened, as Jakes did? And how could Sir Jocelyn Hitch-cock write eyewitness accounts of an earthquake in Messina without leaving his desk in London? Surely these things are not possible. Think again. In 2002, a British journalist working as New York correspondent for London's *Daily Mail* (the same *Daily Mail* that Waugh reported for in the 1930s and which was the model for the *Daily Beast*) seemed to be using Jakes and Hitchcock as his role models. The journalist, Daniel Jeffreys, wrote an eyewitness report for the *Mail* of the execution of a British citizen in Georgia (United States). It was a vivid account, including the condemned man's mouthing of the words "I love you" as he was about to die. The only problem with the story was that Jeffreys made it up. He was not a witness to the execution. No one at the time in London's Fleet Street knew this, and in an episode that could have been lifted directly out of *Scoop*, rival newspapers began berating their own foreign correspondents about why they had missed this scoop (exactly as happens in Waugh's novel when Shumble gets a scoop by making a story up). One British journalist commented (quoted by David Amsden in *New York* magazine), "It's very competitive being a foreign correspondent. But you can't compete with someone who makes things up."

Although the fabrication was later exposed, the *Daily Mail* never printed a correction or issued an apology. This was in keeping with British journalistic practice. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, such as the *New York Times*, British newspapers do not run a daily list of corrections to previous stories. They are no doubt aware of Corker's comment to William in *Scoop* that, if you print too many denials, readers will start to distrust the newspaper. This is an interesting example of the skewed logic that helps to give the novel its Alice-in-Wonderland quality, where everything that happens seems to violate rational common sense but which is justified by its own curious form of logic.

If there were many more Daniel Jeffreys—one hopes there are not since this apparently was not the only story he is alleged to have made up—one might well understand the sentiment Waugh expresses in the Preface to *Scoop*: "Foreign correspondents, at the time the story was written, enjoyed an unprecedented and undeserved fame." Waugh was in a position to know, since for a while he was one himself. It is remarkable how much *Scoop* is based on his own experience of journalism. The book in which he wrote of his time as a war correspondent, *Waugh in Abyssinia*, although little read today, gives a very entertaining account of how journalists went about their business in Addis Ababa

in 1935. It also provides insight into how a novelist takes the raw experience of his own life and turns it into the stuff of fiction.

One of the amusing episodes in *Scoop* is when William loads himself up with excessive supplies for his trip, including such items as a collapsible canoe, six suits of tropical linen, a camp operating table and a set of surgical instruments, and even a portable humidor, "guaranteed to preserve cigars in condition in the Red Sea." Courtesy of the *Daily Mail*, Waugh was given a similar opportunity to kit himself out before setting off to Abyssinia, an experience he describes in one of his memorable *bon mots*: "There are few pleasures more complete, or to me more rare, than that of shopping extravagantly at someone else's expense." Waugh also observed the excesses of others, especially those of a young reporter named William Deedes, of the *Morning Post*, whose equipment weighed a quarter of a ton and included clothing for every possible occasion and items such as snake-proof boots.

When Waugh reached Abyssinia, he soon found that life as a foreign correspondent was less glamorous than he might have expected. There was to be no "crouching in shell holes, typing gallantly amid bursting shrapnel." Since the war had not yet started, there was little hard news to report, and like the journalists in *Scoop*, Waugh went in search of local "color" (items such as descriptions of the landscape, the lives of the people, and native traditions). However, because of the high cost of cables, there was little opportunity for Waugh the writer to produce many worthwhile pieces. In *Scoop*, Waugh made a running joke of the cost of cables and the need to economize. In spite of some chiding from the *Beast*, William never grasps the sparse, elliptical style that saves words and money.

In many other details of *Scoop* that were based on Waugh's experiences in Abyssinia, one can see the imagination of the novelist at work. For example, like William of the *Beast*, Waugh stayed at a Deutsches Haus, run by a formidable German lady. The actual owners of the hotel were a Mr. and Mrs. Heft, but Waugh obviously thought he could make the character stand out more if she were unencumbered by a husband. Thus Frau Dressler is presented as a widow, Herr Dressler having met his end at some point in the past, details unknown.

Waugh applied a similar technique to the menagerie that he encountered at the Deutsches Haus. In *Waugh in Abyssinia*, he describes two geese there who chomped at the ankles of anyone unwise enough to go near them. In *Scoop*, the geese metamorphosed into a remarkable goat who "essayed a series of meteoric onslaughts on the passers-by, ending, at the end of her rope, with a jerk which would have been death to an animal of any other species." Eventually, of course, the rope breaks, providing Waugh with one of the funniest incidents in the novel.

Given the light, humorous tone of *Scoop*, it is perhaps surprising that Waugh was discontented and depressed much of the time he was in Abyssinia. Although he worked diligently, he was not an experienced journalist, and the *Daily Mail* regularly expressed disappointment with the material he sent them, which was judged to be inferior to that of his rivals. In this respect, Corker in *Scoop* represents Waugh. Corker receives a cable

from his news agency that reads in part, "YOUR SERVICE BADLY BEATEN ALROUND LACKING HUMAN INTEREST COLOUR DRAMA PERSONALITY HUMOUR INFORMATION ROMANCE VITALITY." In this comic exaggeration, one senses the frustration of Waugh the gifted writer who nevertheless finds himself unable to please a few newspaper editors in London.

Perhaps partly because of his own frustration and lack of success, Waugh soon developed a contempt for journalistic ways. The scenes in *Scoop* in which the journalists of different nations quarrel with one other at the meetings of the Foreign Press Association seem to be based entirely on what Waugh himself witnessed. And he also comments in *Waugh in Abyssinia* that it was common for journalists to steal or destroy their rivals' stories.

For the celebrity American journalists he encountered, Waugh seems to have had nothing but half-amused contempt. He comments that the American press had created in its readers such a desire for personal details about the correspondents that they made a habit of cabling "expansive pages of autobiography about their state of health and habits of life, reactions and recreations." He also claimed that the Americans would not hesitate in an emergency to invent a story, while the Europeans "must obtain their lies at second hand." What he meant was that the Europeans had to have a source to which they could attribute their information, even if that source was completely unreliable and the journalist knew the information was almost certainly false. The result of these lax standards was that the stories cabled by the press corps in Abyssinia were, according to Waugh, an amalgam of "fantastic rumour . . . trivial gossip, with, here and there embedded, a few facts of genuine personal observation."

Other elements of Waugh's satire in *Scoop* are based on actual events in London's Fleet Street. The move of star reporter Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock from the *Beast* to the *Brute* (a rival newspaper) after a dispute with Lord Copper is based on the departure of ace foreign correspondent Sir Percival Phillips from the *Daily Mail* to the *Daily Telegraph* after a dispute with the *Mail's* owner, Lord Rothermere. This took place just before the Abyssinian war, so Waugh found it easy to get the vacant job with the *Mail*, especially when his friend Diana Cooper (the model for Mrs. Stitch) had a word with Lord Rothermere. This is paralleled in the novel when Mrs. Stitch whispers in Lord Copper's ear about John Courteney Boot.

Is this, then, all there is to *Scoop*—a lighthearted riff on journalism, based on Waugh's own experiences and not to be taken too seriously? Waugh appears to have intended it so, and, indeed, the novel has not attracted as much critical attention as Waugh's earlier, darker, and more pessimistic satires. But *Scoop* cannot be dismissed

For the celebrity American journalists he encountered, Waugh seems to have had nothing but without noting the kind of world it depicts. It is a chaotic, unpredictable one. No one has any control of his or her destiny because the world is ruled not by law or order as manifested in intelligible cause and effect relationships but by fickle fortune. In *Scoop*, however, fortune or fate is ultimately benign, because at the end of the novel, just as in a Shakespearean wish-fulfillment comedy, everyone receives what is dearest

to his or her own heart. William returns to the country; Uncle Theodore gets the chance to saunter around London and even to get paid for it; Mr. Salter gets his dream job; and even Lord Copper, a man needing humbling if ever a man did, gets his desired future "full to surfeit of things which no sane man seriously coveted." So all's well that ends well, the trouble and strife that accompany everyone on the journey are just part of the game Lady Fortune plays, her purpose known only to herself.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Scoop*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

Kelly is an instructor of creative writing and literature at several colleges in Illinois. In this essay, Kelly explains that Waugh's humor is not based in deep understanding of social situations but in simple comic reversal of expectations.

Evelyn Waugh's novel *Scoop* is a social satire, making fun of the people who inhabit its world and of the moral values of the world itself. As most satires do, the book serves to comfort those who are not rich, powerful, or socially dynamic, by showing that the eminent members of society are no better than the average person, and are, in fact, usually worse. Waugh turns the common values of the real world on their head. In the real world, the privileged command what they want, while in *Scoop* the wealthy are so vague about their desires that they end up generally pleased with whatever results are reported to them. In the real world, political extremists are among the most dangerous people on the planet, whereas in the novel the guerillas' disregard for human life is far overshadowed by their lack of competence. In reality, there are media stars who manage to claim the best stories for themselves, whereas, in Waugh's version, the foreign correspondents who claim the most praise are those who ignore the facts of the situation they are covering and make up their own reality.

The success of a social satire is often attributed to the author's courageous handling of the truth. Deep down, readers and critics all suspect that luck and not talent rule the world and that coincidence is a more important force than cleverness; a novel like *Scoop* serves to support that suspicion. Critics tend to give credit to an author like Waugh for showing some sort of plain, unvarnished truth that most novelists are presumably too greedy or frightened to show, as if social satirists are blessed with some sort of x-ray vision that enables them to see through the pretensions that cloud ordinary vision.

In fact, Waugh's satiric method in *Scoop* is much simpler than that. The new reality that he awakens readers to in the novel is achieved by taking common expectations about the way the world operates and reversing them, and then, with a talented novelist's eye for detail, building a reasonable explanation for how the inverted events might happen. A satire like this depends less on the novelist understanding the subtleties of society than it does on making readers accept that which is most unlikely.

There are dozens of cases in which this effect can be seen played out, from the first page to the last. The book begins by introducing readers to a character who holds promise as a protagonist but who soon turns out to be quite minor in significance. John Courteney Boot is described as the sort of underappreciated literary wit and social gadfly that authors frequently use as standins for themselves. He has never been a foreign correspondent before, and the early pages of the novel follow his effort to become one. His lack of experience is itself a factor that makes him an ideal protagonist for a novel about foreign correspondents, giving the author a chance to introduce readers to this world as John Courteney Boot is learning about it.

It is precisely because John Courteney Boot seems so perfectly designed to be the protagonist of this novel that he ends up relegated to a small supporting role. Readers no sooner settle in to the idea of him than he disappears, replaced in the novel by William Boot, a distant relation who is, not surprisingly, even more unqualified to report on a foreign war than John Courtney Boot. John at least has social connections and a respectable writing style, but William is about as socially maladjusted as a person could be (happily secluded in his family's country estate with his loony relatives and servants) and is, in addition, a bad writer.

There are several ways that the novel gains from the shift of focus from John to William. The most obvious is the sheer, joyous nonsense of having the least talented man get the job. Humor depends heavily on anarchy, on the sense that anything can happen.

Putting William at the center of the novel is more than just a reversal of expectation, however. This shift defines the shape that the rest of the novel is to take. The book has to manufacture a reality around William: those in power have to be a little more dense and those who are just following orders have to be just a little more bitter to present a convincing situation where someone so unsuspecting could suddenly find himself on a strange continent so quickly. William does not represent the sort of historic blunder that could happen in the real world: rather, he is so entirely inappropriate to the book's subject that Waugh constantly has to exercise his creativity to justify William's existence. Once William is firmly in position as the novel's protagonist, the other elements have to be equally, if not more, ridiculous. It is this nonsensical nature that is the source of the book's comedy, but it is a mistake to think that, just because the events are about world affairs and are funny, they are necessarily a reflection of political reality.

One aspect of the book that hints at satire of political intrigue but ends up playing as straight-out farce is the way that William's relationship with Kätchen is handled. Her character has aspects that are easily recognizable from any espionage story containing a femme fatale. She is foreign, mysterious, beautiful; she appears to be helpless; and she draws William close to her so subtly that he does not even seem to notice the burden that she is putting on him. In a more serious story, Kätchen would lead William into danger, while in a true social satire, she would represent an element of society that is dangerous to people like him. In this novel, though, she is benign. Her involvement is not an indicator of anything, just a harmless amusement unto itself. She ends up less a threat than an annoyance, costing William nothing but money, which he spends from his expense account. Even the return of Kätchen's husband, who early on presents a threat as one of the mysterious factions vying for control of Ishmaelia behind the scenes, ends up being laughably harmless: "the German," as he is referred to throughout the book, only wants to sleep and to brag about a previous disaster in which he carved a canoe with his own hands that promptly sank. Waugh uses readers' familiarity with characters like Kätchen and the German to make them seem threatening and more significant to the story than they end up being; as he does with other elements of *Scoop*, he then plays the situation for humor by presenting exactly the opposite of what is expected.

Exactly as good-natured and harmless as Kätchen are the journalists with whom William works. They range from Corker, who goes from war zone to war zone collecting souvenirs, to Wendell Jakes, who won a Nobel Peace Prize once for his reporting on a war that he himself created when he wrote lies about political strife in a calm country where he woke up after having fallen asleep on a train. While critics who read this novel as a social satire could make much of the ways that the journalists presented here reflect the callous professional detachment of real journalists, the connection is more playful than real. It may be true that the press is able to change the course of nations through frivolous mistakes, and it is almost certainly true that newspaper reports make journalists sound like they understand the complexities of foreign societies much, much more than they actually do. Still, after putting forth a convincing case that reporters have the power to create reality with their words, Waugh dismisses the entire press corps from the story, sending them off to the nonexistent town of Laku following a bogus lead. The book captures a sense of the herd mentality that dominates the foreign press corps but, by removing the journalists from the story, it surrenders any chance of examining the nuances of how the experienced war correspondents really operate.

Modern readers find themselves uncomfortable with the novel's treatment of Africans. The subject of colonialism is never a comfortable one now, as sensitivity toward racial prejudice has evolved. For Waugh's satire of the citizens of fictitious Ishmaelia to work, he would have to show respect for Africans. For modern readers to appreciate his sense of humor, he would have to treat the African characters no differently than he would treat the European ones. Whether it is because he lacked the interest in the concerns of Africans or because he was too willing to give in to his own pride in being British, Waugh fails at satirizing the politics of Africa at the time.

The closest Waugh comes to successful political satire of the Ishmaelites is in the book's depictions of the two opposing consuls that William visits in London to obtain a visa to the presumed war zone. The fact that the Consul General is from Antigua and the rival legation is from Sierra Leone gives a nice, sharp commentary about outsiders poking into African politics. These two odd characters help to shed light on what was wrong with emerging African nations in the early 1900s. Their success as satiric characters is probably due to the fact that their roles in the book are so brief: they are both such minor, passing characters in William's life that the novel has no responsibility for granting them any semblance of reality.

Those in power in Ishmaelia, however, appear to be written more for humor than for political satire. As he does throughout the book, Waugh relies on the old pattern of simply inverting readers'expectations of the political activists rather than working his satire out of any true sense of the people in this situation. Both the ruling Jackson party and the Communist insurgents are portrayed as lazy and incompetent. Political issues are not the defining points of this political struggle: greed is what motivates both Ishmaelite parties, as well as the Germans and Russians that are backing them. Greed is, if course, an important political motivator, and some have argued persuasively that it is the ultimate driving force behind any political stance. It is also more humorous to reduce political passions down to a base instinct, knocking down their pretensions. It is, however, dishonest to reduce whole categories of people to one simple motivation.

Scoop oversimplifies its African characters, straying too far away from satire. They do not have enough in common with real people in similar situations to reflect the real world but are instead played simply as buffoons. The cause does not seem to be racism, as the novel's narrative voice is generally evenhanded (although it does, notably, slip once, referring to the infuriatingly dense cabdriver as "the coon"). Of course, Waugh would have had the patronizing attitudes toward Africans that were common among Europeans in his time, and in light of those common attitudes his portrayal of Africans is not as harsh as one might expect. Still, he clearly favors the British. One striking example of this: in the real world, a patently incompetent newspaper reporter like William would not be able to walk away from the leader of a victorious political coup saying, as he does, "You're being a bore." In the end, all of the political intrigue between Russians and German and the various Ishmaelite parties turns out to play into the plans of one British manipulator, Mr. Baldwin, who appears to be the only person who has control over the whole situation.

To raise questions about the idea that *Scoop* is a political satire should not diminish the book's value or effectiveness. The novel's view of the world is far from a reflection of the political reality it is taken from; still, it is quite funny and often brilliant. There are things that remind readers of the way the world works and that is the core of political satire. The problem is that, when writing about a complex situation, Waugh resorts often to the comic device of playing against expectations rather than offering readers a comic view of what might really happen in such circumstances.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *Scoop*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #3

McDaniel is a writer with a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. In the following essay, McDaniel discusses the subjects of power and the power of information in Waugh's novel.

Written in 1938, Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* depicts a comic world of dishonest war journalists caught up in a rebellion in the fictional African country of Ishmaelia. The novel is based, in part, on Waugh's stint as a war correspondent in Abyssinia in 1935. On the surface, Waugh does not appear to take the subject of journalistic irresponsibility seriously. Though at times *Scoop* seems more farce than satire, the pointed comic criticism of a powerful press gone awry is more effective precisely because it is entertaining. Having been a correspondent himself, Waugh saw journalistic corruption first hand. In the foreword to Michael Brian Salwen's book *Evelyn Waugh in Ethiopia: The Story Behind "Scoop,"* Leonard Ray Teel writes of Waugh's time as a journalist: "The correspondents' conspiratorial competition for scoops disgusted him. Having missed a big story, he received a critical message by cable from his editors. He is said to have used that cable to light a cigar." In *Scoop*, Waugh has found a more creative way to burn the newspaper establishment by plucking the simple and unsuspecting country gentleman William Boot from his rural existence, where he writes a column titled "Lush Places," into the middle of a fictional war. *Scoop* explores the subjects of power and the power of information and demonstrates this in a number of ways during the course of the story.

Truth is in short supply and, more importantly in Waugh's world, nothing can be taken at face value. At the outset, Waugh leads readers down the garden path by focusing their attention on John Boot only for them to discover that William Boot is the main character. In *Scoop*, mistaken identity happens often and first impressions cannot be trusted as fact. Truth, reality, and facts are usually creations, or distortions, of man, with the press being the largest villain.

From the beginning of the story, the value of truth is irrelevant to Lord Copper, publisher of the newspaper not so subtly named the *Beast*. One might assume someone with the title "Lord" is an upstanding fellow, but it is quickly apparent that wielding the considerable power of the press is what drives him. As Lord Copper learns of the intrigue in Ishmaelia, he expresses his view of the role his paper should play: "The *Beast* stands for strong mutually antagonistic governments everywhere. Self-sufficiency at home, self-assertion abroad." This statement informs the reader of the enormous egotism of Lord Copper, a symbol of the press, and Waugh's view of the British Government as arrogant. Lord Copper also states: "I am in consultation with my editors on the subject. We think it a very promising little war. A microcosm of world drama. We promise to give it fullest publicity." Lord Copper's interests in the "little war" is not about the people or politics involved but exploiting the inherent drama to sell newspapers.

The political conflict in Ishmaelia is derived out of a dispute among the current ruling family, the Jacksons. Smiles Soum, a distant family member of the Jacksons, is the

fascist leader, upset by his minor post as "the Assistant Director of Public Morals." With such a title, one can only assume it is a low position, with little influence, within the government. Smiles Soum believes that the Ishmaelites, a race of whites, "must purge themselves of the Negro taint." Such words arouse international interest and the world's press soon arrives eager to spread future news, providing Soum the power he desires. Waugh mocks the ignorance of Europeans in Africa by having them equipped with "cuckoo clocks, phonographs, opera hats." The inclusion of such racial intolerance is undoubtedly a comment on the conflict between world powers at the time, but it is not the focus of this novel. While racism may be insidious, Waugh is determined to keep our attention on those who could tell us about it in detail but do not.

William is quickly indoctrinated into this treacherous world of journalism when a fellow journalist, Corker, tries to scoop him by refusing to decipher a message from the *Beast* to William written in "cablese." After learning that they will be working together, Corker agrees to teach William how to read the message. Corker also tells William that two of the great war correspondents, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock and Wenlock Jakes, made their reputations on two dubious scoops. These two journalists of international prominence derived their celebrity from lies and deceit in what is commonly expected to be the most reputable of professions. The journalists' stories in *Scoop* are untrustworthy and gratuitous. Continuing his education of William, Corker advises him to wire "colour" stories when there is nothing to report: "Colour is just a lot of bulls-eyes about nothing. It's easy to write and easy to read . . . ," which is precisely what the editors desire.

Colour stories, lies, and deceit are the common tools of a journalist in Waugh's world. The power of misinformation is Waugh's theme. On one occasion, it is mistakenly believed that Hitchcock has traveled to the city of Laku to interview Smiles Saum. The world's correspondents at once follow in his footsteps, always afraid of being scooped. Readers soon learn that Laku is Ishmaelian for "I don't know." The city was, in fact, erroneously added to the map years ago by a European map-maker who thought that a servant's answer of "Laku" to his question, "what is this place?" was the name of the city. In Waugh's world, the haphazard is often generated through people's ignorance, greed, and lack of attention to truth and detail. Not only does a servant have the power to name a city in the right set of circumstances but this misinformation leads the world's press on a goose chase. This is further emphasized as Hitch-cock exits from his hotel room and readers learn that he never left for Laku. He tells William: "The job of an English special [correspondent] is to spot the story he wants, get it—then clear out and leave the rest to the [news] agencies." Waugh is continually building on the formidable power of the press, which is all too eager to supply misinformation in order to present stories the public will devour rather than focusing on the less entertaining facts.

One person who does actually supply accurate information to William is Kätchen. This down-on-her-luck woman exerts considerable power over the country journalist and is at the root of a major turning point in William's journalistic career, not to mention the novel. Captivated by her instantly, William is in love and cannot resist any request. Waugh presents Kätchen as selfish and manipulative, thus her influence over William is limitless. Kätchen persuades William to make her his secretary, which has unpredictable results. Just as all seems lost for William and he receives a wire stating that "LORD

COPPER PERSONALLY REQUIRES VICTORIES," Kätchen takes female action. Through a series of shopping sprees, which says a lot about Waugh's view of what occupies a woman's time in the 1930s, Kätchen learns that President Jackson is being held hostage in an apparent coup d'etat. Before William can contact the *Beast*, he receives word that they have sacked him. Undeterred, William decides to send the information anyway. William Boot displays the same sarcasm as the author, only without the benefit of punctuation: "NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED EXCEPT TO THE PRESIDENT WHO HAS BEEN IMPRISONED IN HIS OWN PALACE BY REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA HEADED BY SUPERIOR BLACK CALLED BENITO AND RUSSIAN JEW WHO [Jack] BANNISTER SAYS HE IS UP TO NO GOOD THEY SAY HE IS DRUNK WHEN HIS CHILDREN TRY TO SEE HIM BUT GOVERNESS SAYS MOST UNUSUAL LOVELY SPRING WEATHER BUBONIC PLAGUE RAGING . . . SACK RECEIVED SAFELY THOUGHT I MIGHT AS WELL SEND THIS ALL THE SAME."

Kätchen continues to figure largely in William's professional rise. Shortly after his first scoop, William learns that the Germans and Russians have been trying to mine gold ore. Dr. Benito, the minister of foreign affairs and propaganda for Ishmaelia, is working for the Soviets and imprisons Kätchen to try and keep William from wiring his latest scoop. However, this is not an effective deterrent and, suddenly, the world powers have been altered. William Boot, Countryman, now has the power—whether he is cognizant of his new found influence or not. Scoring his second enormous scoop, William sends a 2,000 word telegram to the *Beast* informing them of the plot. The *Beast* is beyond thrilled and William's celebrity begins to grow. But there is no safety in this woman's arms for William. Having been involved with the failed German attempt to win the mine deal, Kätchen's previously absent husband returns and is now in grave danger. Ever the smooth customer, Kätchen bribes her way out of prison, reunites with her husband, and William, still powerless to Kätchen's desires, provides them with his canoe for their escape. Even though the inclusion of this scheming woman appears to the reader, like many of Waugh's plot points, to be arbitrary, her presence must lead us to conclude that he wishes us to come away with a certain view of the female sex. While one recognizes this characterization of Kätchen as a negative stereotype, there is another individual in *Scoop* who evades explanation and yet fills a pivotal role in this power play.

The revolution and counterrevolution in *Scoop* suggests that the overthrow of governments comes about through blundering, irrationality, and, finally, the unknown powers that lurk behind the scenes. In the case of Mr. Baldwin, whose true identity remains a mystery throughout the novel, the power of one individual can change the fate of a country. Mr. Baldwin is the greatest power in *Scoop*—intangible and thus unknowable. A powerbroker and manipulator of world events behind the scenes, Mr. Baldwin creates outcomes and then uses William to filter information to the world via newspapers. While Mr. Baldwin freely uses his power from unseen quarters, he chooses not to be recognized as the author of his own views. Instead, he shuns the spotlight while positioning William to be bathed in it even further. In another nod towards Waugh's ideas on British attitudes toward Africa, Baldwin tells William he has a message for the British public: "'Might' must find a way. Not 'Force' remember; other nations use 'force'; we Britons alone use 'Might.' Only one thing can set things right—

sudden and extreme violence, or better still, the effective threat of it." Baldwin, like Waugh, understands the importance of well chosen words.

Because of the enigmatic Baldwin, the unassuming countryman, William Boot, returns to London an enormous celebrity and respected journalist. Lord Copper has orchestrated a tremendous banquet and has even used his influence to obtain a knighthood for William. William's absence cannot, however, prevent yet another mix-up—his invitation to the banquet is sent to John Boot and, as the banquet is about to begin, there is no Boot to congratulate. Uncle Theodore, William's eccentric relative, arrives at the paper to speak with the features editor about some of his "dirty stories" they might be interested in and is quickly shuffled in to take the place of honor. This mix-up makes Uncle Theodore the third Boot to be considered a war correspondent. Shakespeare, who used mistaken identities throughout many of his comedies, would be proud of the variety of ways Waugh finds to mistake identities in *Scoop*.

Shakespeare's characters often escaped into the woods where lines of reality are blurred. Conversely, William Boot journeys from his authentic country life to enter a game with the power brokers of the urban world that William is ill-equipped to play. *Scoop* is an escapist novel that contains a plethora of absurd situations highlighting the disparity between reality and illusion, fact and fiction. By the end, the only way for William to preserve his soul is to return to the small familiar manageable and tranquil world of the country where the truth can be somewhat contained and not so easily manufactured. While much seems to have returned to normal, there is a question of the harmony created at the end. Working on his old local column "Lush Places," William writes that "rodents pilot their furry brood through the stubble," which is not a metaphor of complete fulfillment. As the novel closes, readers are left to pause and give consideration to our own existence in a world that is far from perfect and often tragically comic. The ultimate power of *Scoop* is the power of fiction to remake reality, which is perhaps Waugh's final point.

Source: Daryl McDaniel, Critical Essay on *Scoop*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Adaptations

An unabridged audiocassette tape of *Scoop*, narrated by Simon Cadell, is published by Cover to Cover Cassettes Ltd. (1998).

Topics for Further Study

In *Scoop*, the *Daily Beast* has a definite editorial position on the war in Ishmaelia. On the World Wide Web, examine the editorial pages of the *New York Times* and the *Wall St. Journal*. What can you tell about each paper's political position from its editorials? When both editorialize on the same issue, what differing positions do they take up, and what does this indicate about their underlying political philosophies? You can also try the same exercise with the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Times*.

More people today get their news from television rather than from newspapers. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each medium as a source of news?

Often in fiction, the protagonist grows and changes as a result of the experiences he undergoes. Does this happen to William Boot, or is he just the same at the end of the novel as he was at the beginning? If he has changed, how is he different?

In recent wars, such as the Persian Gulf War of 1991 and the war in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, the American government has imposed restrictions on American reporters covering the conflict. This was not the case during the Vietnam War. Should the press have unfettered access to war zones and be free to report whatever is happening, or should restrictions be imposed in the cause of national security? Who should decide?

Compare and Contrast

1930s: Ethiopia (Abyssinia) is invaded by Italy in 1935. The Italians use poison gas, defying the Geneva Protocol that banned such weapons in 1925. The Italian occupation continues until 1941, when British forces liberate the country.

Today: After rebels topple the socialist government of Ethiopia in 1991, multiparty elections are held in 1995 for the first time ever. In 1998, a border war breaks out with Eritrea, Ethiopia's northern neighbor. It is resolved by a peace treaty in 2000.

1930s: Newspapers and radio are the only means by which people are informed about world events.

Today: Most people use television rather than newspapers as their main source of news. However, more and more people are turning to the Internet as a news source. Because of the growth of the Internet, the old concept of a single daily edition of a newspaper is changing. The major newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, have websites in which the main stories are updated every few hours.

1930s: Foreign correspondents such as H. R. Knickerbocker and John Gunther are well known in America for their vigorous and thorough reporting of world events.

Today: Newspaper foreign correspondents are no longer household names to the American or British public. Their place has been taken by television reporters. Reporters such as MSNBC's Ashleigh Banfield make names for themselves by broadcasting from dangerous parts of the globe. Television and newspaper reporters take risks in doing their jobs, and occasionally there is a tragedy. The kidnapping and murder of *Wall St. Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in 2002, as he pursued a story about terrorism in Pakistan, illustrates the dangers encountered by reporters in unstable regions of the world.

What Do I Read Next?

Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (1945) chronicles twenty years in the lives of the Marchmains, a wealthy English Catholic family. Unlike his earlier novels, this is not a satire but an exploration of love, politics, and the call of religion.

English comic writer P. G. Wodehouse was one of the influences on *Scoop*, and his novel *Full Moon* (1947) is one of his most popular romantic farces. The setting of Blandings Castle is similar to Boot Magna in *Scoop*, and the intricate plotting, eccentric characters, and happy ending make the novel a classic of its kind.

Secrets of the Press: Journalists on Journalism (1999), edited by Stephen Carter, is an entertaining collection of essays by British journalists on the state of the profession today. The essays by Christopher Munnion ("Into Africa"), Ann Leslie ("Female 'Firemen' "), and Emma Daly ("Reporting from the Front") describe, often amusingly, their experiences as foreign correspondents.

Selina Hastings's *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (1994) was written with the full support of Waugh's family, who were dismayed at the negative portrayal of Waugh's personality in an earlier biography by Martin Stannard. Hastings presents a more balanced view that aims to give as close an impression as possible of what it was like to know the man.

Further Study

Beaty, Frederick L., *The Ironic World of Evelyn Waugh: A Study of Eight Novels*, Northern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Beaty examines the role that irony plays in Waugh's fiction, in terms of plot, theme, and character. He argues that Waugh's use of irony adds unstated and often crucial meaning to the text.

Crabbe, Kathryn W., *Evelyn Waugh*, Continuum, 1988.

This is a readable survey of Waugh's novels, but in the chapter on *Scoop*, Crabbe makes the error of confusing the two characters Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock and Wenlock Jakes.

Davis, Robert Murray, *Evelyn Waugh, Writer*, Pilgrim Books, Inc., 1981.

This includes a chapter on *Scoop*, in which Davis analyzes the changes Waugh made as he revised the novel from early drafts.

Lane, Calvin W., *Evelyn Waugh*, Twayne English Authors Series, No. 301, Twayne Publishers, 1981.

Lane concentrates on Waugh's fiction, with chapters on all the major novels. He also discusses Waugh's views on the craft of fiction and offers an evaluation of Waugh's achievement as a satiric novelist.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Novels for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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