Siddhartha Study Guide

Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Hermann Hesse referred to his novels as "biographies of the soul." In *Siddhartha* (1922), the title character is an exceptionally intelligent Brahman, a member of the highest caste in the Hindu religion, who seemingly has a well-ordered existence yet feels spiritually hollow. Siddhartha embarks on a journey of self-discovery that takes him through a period of asceticism and self-denial followed by one of sensual indulgence. An encounter with Buddha is intellectually meaningful but not spiritually affecting, and Siddhartha continues his own search, ultimately finding peace by a river. Siddhartha's search for truth and identity, the "inward journey" as Hesse referred to this recurring theme in his work, is reflective of the autobiographical and introspective nature of Hesse's writing. Hesse's works are distinctive, challenging, and unlike most of the works of Western writers. He has enjoyed periods of great popularity as well as periods of either neglect and even scorn. Although his receipt of the 1946 Nobel Prize for Literature spurred a flurry of translations, which included the 1951 English translation of *Siddhartha*, his works did not gain much recognition in the English-speaking world until the 1960s. Hesse excelled in the depiction of personal crisis and private agony; such literature seems to be particularly popular during periods of cultural crisis, which accounts by and large for Hesse's idolization in Germany immediately after two devastating wars. He was similarly venerated in the United States during the politically and socially chaotic 1960s and 1970s.

Author Biography

Born in Calw, Germany, in 1877, Hermann Hesse was influenced by his family's mix of background and beliefs. His father, a Pietist-Lutheran, believed that man is basically evil and requires austere discipline. His parents and grandparents had been missionaries in India and the Far East, and their homes yielded the flavors of Indian, Buddhist, and Mohammedan cultures. Hesse said, "From the time I was a child I breathed in and absorbed the spiritual side of India just as deeply as Christianity."

Hypersensitive, imaginative, and headstrong, Hermann behaved rebelliously while yearning to be a poet and magician. School authorities doubted his sanity, and he even fared poorly at schools for mentally challenged and emotionally disturbed children. Instead, he stayed at home, gardening, assisting in his father's publishing house, and reading books on Eastern philosophy and religion in his grandfather's library.

In 1899, Hesse, who had become something of a misfit, moved to Basel, Switzerland, determined to learn the art of living with other people. In 1904, he married and moved to remote Gaienhofen. Seven years later, he left for a trip to the East, expecting to find wisdom in India, which he considered to be a centerplace innocence; he also hoped to discover answers to his personal problems. Finding only poverty and commercialized Buddhism, he returned, suffering from heat exhaustion, dysentery, and disillusionment.

World War I left an already unsettled Hesse badly shaken. Nationalistic enough to hope for a German victory, he also abhorred war and argued for internationalism. That he volunteered his services to the German embassy in Bern and coedited two weeklies for German prisoners of war did little to dissuade his detractors among both the militarists and the pacifists. His father's death in 1916 further compounded his growing despair. At this time Hesse underwent Jungian psychoanalysis, a process that put him in touch with the irrational forces that lurk beneath both individuals and society at large as well as with the idea of a self-quest through synthesis of these forces.

In 1919, he settled alone in Montagnola, where *Siddhartha* was written. Persuaded that a postwar Germany was susceptible to change, Hesse helped to found and edit a periodical devoted to social reform, pacifism, and internationalism. Resurgent nationalism and spreading communism caused him to terminate his association with the monthly in 1921. Indignities and waning faith in Germany's political future persuaded Hesse to become a citizen of Switzerland in 1924. During this period, Hesse divorced his first wife, and, after a brief second marriage, married Ninon Dolbin, with whom he lived until his death.

During World War II, Hesse was again vilified by the German right-wing press. The bitterness and shock caused by the extermination of his wife's family by the Nazis stayed with Hesse for the rest of his life. Until his death from leukemia in 1962, he remained in Montagnola, rarely leaving it and never going outside of Switzerland, not even when he was awarded the Goethe Prize of Frankfurt am Main and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946.

Plot Summary

Part I—Siddhartha's Religious Quest for Knowledge

The first section of the novel describes Siddhartha's attempts to follow various religions. At first, he follows his father's example by performing the daily rituals of the Hindu religion. Everyone loves the handsome, happy, young Siddhartha, and they are convinced that he will soon become a successful Brahman like his father. Beneath Siddhartha's external devotion and contentment, however, he harbors an insatiable longing to explore the deeper meanings of life, which cannot be learned through codified religious rituals. When a group of wandering ascetics called Samanas pass through his village, he decides to leave his father's home and Brahman religion to follow after the Samanas' ascetic way of life. In addition, he persuades his closest friend, Govinda, to come with him and embrace this new path to knowledge. At first, Siddhartha's father is extremely angry and forbids Siddhartha to join the Samanas, but Siddhartha eventually wins his father's reluctant approval by demonstrating his firm determination to follow the Samanas' ascetic way of life.

Having already learned discipline and determination as a Brahman, Siddhartha immediately adapts to the Samanas' way of life, and he quickly masters the ascetic arts of fasting, suffering, meditation, and self-denial. He renounces all worldly pleasures and conquers the self's desires. Ultimately, however, he questions the Samanas' ascetic philosophies when he realizes that the path of selfdenial can only bring temporary relief from suffering. When Siddhartha hears about another holy man, Gotama the illustrious Buddha, he convinces Govinda to go with him to learn about his new religious philosophy.

Together, Siddhartha and Govinda learn about the Fourfold Way, the Eightfold Path, and other Buddhist beliefs. Govinda is convinced by Gotama's teachings and decides to convert to the Buddhist religion, but Siddhartha remains unconvinced. In particular, he is troubled by a fundamental contradiction in the Buddha's philosophy. On one hand, the Buddha embraces the unity of all things, but on the other hand he denies this unity by seeking to overcome the physical world. Disillusioned with religions, Siddhartha forsakes all religious paths to knowledge. He sadly departs from Govinda and sets out on his own to find the meaning of life.

Part II—Siddhartha's Material Quest for Physical Pleasure

In the second section of the novel, Siddhartha turns away from religion and begins trying to learn from the physical pleasures of the material world. He wanders through the forest until he comes to a river, which he is ferried across by a kind old ferryman. He then wanders into the town where he eventually meets a beautiful young courtesan named Kamala. Kamala quickly convinces him to abandon the simple clothing of the

ascetics and take up the fashionable dress of the wealthy. In addition, Kamala also helps Siddhartha get a job with Kamaswami, a rich merchant who lives in the town.

Siddhartha quickly learns the arts of business and becomes a successful trader, and as his success grows he also becomes Kamala's favorite lover. He learns the passionate arts of love from Kamala and the worldly pleasures that money can buy, but he always remains somewhat detached from this new life of pleasure. Unlike the ordinary people who take their business as a serious matter, Siddhartha always sees it as somewhat of a game that he enjoys playing but never takes seriously. Siddhartha does not care whether he wins or loses because he does not see this life as connected to the deepest core of his self. Consequently, even though he obtains all the worldly pleasures of love and money, Siddhartha begins to grow weary of this lifestyle as well, and he seeks to drown this weariness in gambling, drinking, and sexual pleasure. At the height of his disillusionment, he dreams that he finds Kamala's songbird dead in its cage. Interpreting this dream as a symbol of the death of his own self, Siddhartha leaves the town and forsakes his lifestyle of physical pleasure and worldly success.

Part III—Siddhartha's Vision of the Unity of All Life

In the third section of the novel, Siddhartha leaves Kamala's house and wanders through the forest until he returns to the ferryman's river, where he falls asleep under a tree. By pure coincidence, Govinda happens to pass by while he is sleeping, and Govinda stops to watch over him without knowing it is Siddhartha. When Siddhartha wakes up, he recognizes Govinda, and they are happy to meet again. After Govinda departs, Siddhartha reflects back upon the various paths that he has followed and recognizes that they are all transitory. Consequently, Siddhartha lets these previous experiences die as he contemplates the mystical word "Om" and the essential unity of all life. Having recognized that the river represents this oneness of life, Siddhartha decides to stay at the river with the ferryman, Vasudeva.

While Siddhartha is working for the ferryman, another group of pilgrims pass by on their way to Gotama's funeral, and Kamala is one of them. However, she dies after being bitten by a snake, leaving her eleven-year-old son, who turns out also to be Siddhartha's child; Kamala had become pregnant during her last night with Siddhartha and has named the boy after his father. Young Siddhartha, however, has been spoiled by a life of wealth, so he gets frustrated with Siddhartha's simple life and eventually runs away. At first, Siddhartha tries to control his son and get him to return, but eventually Vasudeva instructs Siddhartha to seek wisdom from the river. While contemplating the river, Siddhartha experiences a vision of the essential unity of all life. Just as the river flows into the sea only to return as rain, all of the various forms and aspects of life flow into each other to form a single whole. In a conversation with Govinda, Siddhartha describes the understanding that he gained from this visionary experience.

"Listen, my friend! I am a sinner and you are a sinner, but someday the sinner will be Brahma again, will someday attain Nirvana, will someday become a Buddha. Now this 'someday' is illusion; it is only a comparison. The sinner is not on the way to a Buddha-

like state; he is not evolving, although our thinking cannot conceive things otherwise. No, the potential Buddha already exists in the sinner; his future is already there. The potential hidden Buddha must be recognized in him, in you, in everybody. The world, Govinda, is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a long path to perfection. No, it is perfect at every moment; every sin already carries grace within it, all small children are potential old men, all sucklings have death within them, all dying people—eternal life. It is not possible for one person to see how far another is on the way; the Buddha exists in the robber and dice player, the robber exists in the Brahman. During deep meditation it is possible to dispel time, to see simultaneously all the past, present and future, and then everything is good, everything is perfect, everything is Brahman."

In this passage, Siddhartha explains how the endless cycles of birth and death are all part of a single grand unity in Brahman. Once time is overcome and the essential unity of all beings is recognized, everything can be seen in its true light as a manifestation of Brahman. Consequently, both life and death, both joy and sorrow, must be recognized as good. Nothing can be dismissed as inconsequential or unnecessary to the perfection of the whole.

The novel ends with Govinda returning to the river to seek wisdom from Siddhartha, who has now become a wise old sage. Siddhartha explains to Govinda, however, that wisdom cannot be taught and that verbal explanations are traps that keep people from true wisdom. Consequently, instead of discussing philosophies, Siddhartha instructs Govinda to kiss him on the forehead, and this kiss reveals to Govinda the unity of all things. Looking into Siddhartha's face, Govinda also receives a vision of all things becoming one. Thus, the two old friends achieve the wisdom that they had begun seeking together many years before as young men.

Part 1: "The Brahmin's Son"

Part 1: "The Brahmin's Son" Summary

In the first chapter, we are introduced to Siddhartha, the main character of the story. Handsome, strong, and intelligent, Siddhartha is a poor young man who lives in India. Those around him, especially his friend Govinda, love and admire Siddhartha and seem content with their lives. However, unlike the others, Siddhartha is unhappy. He is filled with "dreams and restless thoughts," which come "flowing to him from the river."

Hoping to find peace and contentment elsewhere, Siddhartha decides to leave home and join a group of men called Samanas, who live very simple lives of prayer and meditation, a form of deep relaxation and breathing. However, before Siddhartha can leave, he must first ask his father's permission.

Initially, Siddhartha's father does not want his son to leave. His father sees how keen Siddhartha is to join the Samanas and gives his permission. Siddhartha's close friend Govinda decides to leave as well. The two young men set off for the forest, where they will join the Samanas.

Part 1: "The Brahmin's Son" Analysis

Herman Hesse, the author of *Siddhartha*, tells us a great deal about the main character and setting at the very beginning of his novel. In the first chapter, we learn enough to be able to picture Siddhartha's physical appearance: he is "strong," and "handsome," with "slender shoulders," "kinglike eyes," and a "slim figure." Hesse also tells us about Siddhartha's personality or character: he is "thirsty for knowledge" and intelligent but also restless and unhappy. We also learn how much the people around Siddhartha love him, including his parents, his friend Govinda and other people in the village where Siddhartha lives.

Hesse also creates a strong sense of the poor world in which Siddhartha and the people in his village live. Clearly, Siddhartha's life is very different from that of most Westerners reading this book today or even in the past. For one, his life is devoted primarily to prayer and religious thought. Reaching a state of bliss and tranquillity is far more important to Siddhartha and Govinda than their physical possessions.

Hesse, born in 1877, lived most of his life in Germany. He came from a family of missionaries (people who preach their religion in other countries) and grew up with strong ties to India and other parts of Asia. In addition to a trip to India in 1911, which undoubtedly influenced Hesse to write *Siddhartha*, he was very much against World War I, being fought while he was writing the novel.

Siddhartha's desire to achieve personal fulfillment and a sense of purpose in his life mirrors experiences many teenagers go through. Hesse himself probably had similar

feelings, especially given his great displeasure at the world events unfolding around him.

Part 1: "With the Samanas"

Part 1: "With the Samanas" Summary

Siddhartha and Govinda leave their town to live with the Samanas, a group of spiritual men. Before leaving, Siddhartha gives a poor man most of his clothes, his first step in ridding himself of worldly possessions. For Siddhartha, the goal of his new life is to become "empty"--to no longer have human needs and emotions, such as thirst, happiness and sadness. Siddhartha believes that to achieve Nirvana or peace, he must strip himself of just about everything associated with being human.

With Govinda at his side, the two men practice meditation, and they learn to quiet their heartbeats. They eat only once a day, and for twenty-eight days straight, they eat nothing. Only rarely do they talk to one another, and except for the Samanas, the only contact the men have with other people is when they go to the village to beg for a little food.

While they are in the forest with the Samanas, Siddhartha and Govinda hear a rumor, spreading throughout the villages. There is a new Buddha--an extremely wise Buddhist leader--named Gotama. Siddhartha is eager to learn how to find self-fulfillment, but he is skeptical how much Gotama can teach him. Eventually, Siddhartha decides to follow Gotama. Govinda goes with him.

Part 1: "With the Samanas" Analysis

As we read Chapter 2, we begin to see that Siddhartha is not merely a little restless or bored with his life. He is eager to find answers to life's big questions: What is the purpose of life? How can I give my life meaning? Are the answers in religion? Why is there so much suffering all around me? These themes will be explored throughout the novel.

The life of the Samanas represent an extreme way of life to be sure, but it is one Siddhartha thinks may bring him peace and contentment. When he has still not found Nirvana after living for a while with the Samanas, he becomes disappointed. He feels that their way of life is not for him and decides to turn elsewhere--to the Buddha Gotama--for answers to his questions.

This chapter also introduces the question of where we should look to find the answers to life's big questions: Are the answers outside us--in the words of religious leaders? Can we learn the answers through personal experience? This theme of the importance of achieving a balance between what we learn from other people and what we learn for ourselves is another one that will be developed throughout the novel.

By this point in *Siddhartha*, we have also begun to see the function Govinda serves for the main character and for Hesse, the author. Given the novel is written in the third

person, from the perspective of an unknown narrator, the character of Govinda functions as someone to whom Siddhartha can share his feelings and talk through his difficult questions.

Part 1: "Gotama"

Part 1: "Gotama" Summary

Initially, Siddhartha is totally mesmerized by the Buddha Gotama--known as the Illustrious One. He and Govinda listen attentively to his learned teachings about the way to find enlightenment or supreme knowledge. Govinda very much wants to stay with Gotama and become a holy man. Siddhartha decides to leave, having decided that he cannot achieve enlightenment by listening to teachers; he must find knowledge through life experiences, on his own. Govinda weeps when he hears his beloved friend is leaving but decides to devote his life to Gotama.

Part 1: "Gotama" Analysis

This chapter develops the theme of whether it is better to gain knowledge by learning from others or whether one needs to learn on one's own, by living life. While Siddhartha recognizes that Gotama is extremely wise and has much to teach him and others, Siddhartha also realizes that he needs to "leave all doctrines and all teachers and to reach [his] goal alone." This message resonates with modern readers as it did when Hesse wrote his book, in the 1920s. The lesson that Siddhartha learns in this chapter is that, just as there is a great deal of knowledge about life we can learn from our parents, teachers, religious leaders, and others, there is much we can only learn from being out in the world and experiencing all life has to offer--joys and sorrows.

This chapter also reveals more about Siddhartha's friendship with Govinda. The two men clearly admire each other, but each must find his own way. Govinda has for too long been in Siddhartha's shadow. Govinda is not yet ready--and may never be--to go out on his own.

Part 1: "Awakening"

Part 1: "Awakening" Summary

As Siddhartha sets out on his own, he realizes he is no longer a youth but a man, like a snake who has shed his old skin. He also resolves no longer to learn from others but to be his "own pupil" and "to learn from myself the secret of Siddhartha." As he walks along, not sure where he is going and feeling utterly alone, Siddhartha is filled with sadness, yet he feels he is more himself than ever.

Part 1: "Awakening" Analysis

This chapter, like the last one, reinforces the theme that we each must find out own way in the world, that no one can show us the way to happiness and self-fulfillment. Until now, Siddhartha has been like a boy who listens to and believes what others tell him. On his journey since leaving home, he has begun to question everything he has been taught.

Hesse uses several similes in this chapter to let the reader know how Siddhartha feels and what he is thinking. For example, early in the chapter, Hesse says that Siddhartha "realized that something had left him, like the old skin that a snake sheds." Toward the end, Hesse compares Siddhartha, standing alone, to "a star in the heavens." Used effectively, similes like these tell us, in just a few words, a lot about a character; they create word pictures that can be extremely useful in helping us understand a character's inner life.

Chapter 4 is the last chapter in part I. Clearly, Siddhartha has completed an important stage in his spiritual journey. As the chapter ends, we have no idea what direction Siddhartha's life will take.

Part 2: "Kamala"

Part 2: "Kamala" Summary

Siddhartha travels alone for several days until one night when he stays in a straw hut owned by a man who ferries people across the river. That night, Siddhartha has a strange dream. In the dream, he sees Govinda, but as Siddhartha reaches out to hug his friend, Govinda turns into a woman. The dream is not unpleasant, however. In fact, it brings Siddhartha great pleasure.

The next morning, Siddhartha asks the ferryman to take him to the other side of the river. The friendly man reminds him of Govinda, in that he does not question things; he is obedient, and wants to think very little.

In a town across the river, Siddhartha meets a beautiful, rich woman named Kamala. Hoping to learn about love from her, Siddhartha decides to shave his scruffy beard and comb his matted hair. That is not enough to please Kamala. He must also have fine clothes, shoes and money. Siddhartha tells Kamala he does not have those things but that he can write poetry. He then composes a poem for the woman. She is impressed, kisses Siddhartha and tells him how handsome he is.

Part 2: "Kamala" Analysis

Kamala is the first female character Siddhartha meets. She appears to serve several functions in the story. First, she arouses feelings of love in the main character that have never been awakened before, letting the reader learn more about Siddhartha as these feelings are aroused. Second, she creates conflict in the story, since she is so different from Siddhartha. Unlike poor Siddhartha, who has nothing but the ragged clothes on his back, Kamala lives a life of luxury. She expects the people around her to have fine things as well. Kamala challenges Siddhartha's beliefs, especially how he feels about money and fine clothes. In addition, because she is so beautiful and seems taken by Siddhartha, she makes us wonder whether he might stay with her and discontinue his journey, making him like the other people around him, who "think little."

The tone or atmosphere of this chapter is noticeably different from the tone in the chapters in Part I. There is no longer a sense of heaviness and despair. Instead, there is a sense of happiness, even joy. It is as if Siddhartha is seeing the world through the eyes of a child, for the first time. He sees much that is beautiful around him: animals, flowers, the moon and stars--and, of course, the lovely Kamala.

This chapter is also notable for its references to children. When he says goodbye to the friendly ferryman, Siddhartha is struck by how much the people he has been meeting are like children, who obey and want to "think little." Moreover, in the village he goes to after getting off the ferry, Siddhartha sees children dancing around in the town. Hesse

seems to be suggesting that it is important to retain some of the joyfulness of children but unlike them, to challenge our beliefs and what we are told.

Part 2: "Amongst the People"

Part 2: "Amongst the People" Summary

In the next stage of his journey, Siddhartha meets another person who is rich, a merchant named Kamaswami. At first, the shopkeeper thinks Siddhartha is just a poor man with no skills or abilities. However, when Siddhartha shows Kamaswami that he can read and write, the merchant is very impressed. He invites Siddhartha to live with him, and Siddhartha agrees.

Very soon, Kamaswami begins to confer with Siddhartha about business matters. However, to Siddhartha, business is nothing more than a game. He is only working so he can wear fine clothes and shoes when he visits Kamala. He begins to feel, once again, that life is passing him by.

Part 2: "Amongst the People" Analysis

In this chapter, Hesse continues to develop the theme of how adults are like children. Many of the adults Siddhartha meets seem like children, and he fears becoming like them. They "play" at business, are amused by the people around them and remain cheerful, regardless of the circumstances. From Siddhartha's perspective, by behaving in these childlike ways, these people do not engage fully with life and never reach a high level of self-awareness or understanding. In other words, they remain immature in every way.

Another idea that is developed in this chapter is the importance of treating people equally whether they are rich or poor. This is clearly something Siddhartha believes in and that separates him from other people. They are consumed by a desire to acquire things. He believes that contentment (Nirvana) is possible only when one feels inner peace; possessions are not at all important.

Part 2: "Samsara"

Part 2: "Samsara" Summary

Years have passed and Siddhartha is a very rich man, with his own house and servants. Acquisitiveness--the desire for possessions--has clearly overcome him. Yet, he also has contempt for riches, as he did as a young man. He plays games of dice, in which he loses thousands and wins thousands, and becomes hardened and mean. Deep within him, though, Siddhartha still holds many of the values he learned from his father and from the Samaras in the forest. Also deep within him, weariness and sadness grow.

One night Siddhartha has a very frightening dream. He awakes with overwhelming feelings of sadness and decides to give up his life of excess and concerns about money. He leaves, giving up all his possessions and his association with Kamaswami, Kamala and the others. Soon after, Kamala finds out she is pregnant with Siddhartha's child.

Part 2: "Samsara" Analysis

The dream Siddhartha has is quite simple, yet it evokes strong feelings in the reader, as it does in the main character. Like the caged songbird, Siddhartha is lifeless and mute, aching for freedom.

One of the ways in which Hesse enables the reader to see how much Siddhartha has changed from when he was a young man is by "drawing" us a picture of how he looks. The young Siddhartha, we recall, was strong and handsome; now, he is "soft" and "flabby." This description also tells us a lot about how Siddhartha has changed as a person. He no longer is strong and no longer has a sense of purpose. In other words, both his mind and body have become flabby, or lacking in form and substance.

While Hesse compares adults and children less directly in this chapter than earlier, he uses a metaphor--in this case the game of dice--to comment on Siddhartha's feelings. Authors frequently use metaphors in this way, to represent how a character is feeling. The game of dice--which is all a matter of luck--captures very well how Siddhartha has changed since he was younger. No longer seeking contentment from within himself, Siddhartha seeks excitement from the game--and, like the other men, gets excited when he wins.

Samsara, the title of this chapter, is a Buddhist term that means "wandering on." More than just the idea of physically leaving, the idea is that we all have a tendency to keep creating new worlds and moving on to them. This is what Siddhartha has been doing throughout the book. As he becomes discontent with one way of living, he moves on to something else.

Part 2: "By the River"

Part 2: "By the River" Summary

Siddhartha heads to the river, away from town. Standing at the river, he hears the sound of one word--*Om*--, which means "the Perfect One" or "Perfection." After a very deep, refreshing sleep, Siddhartha awakens to see his old friend Govinda. He is now a monk who preaches the teachings of his leader, Gotama. Govinda has aged but Siddhartha thinks his friend still looks curious and loyal. Govinda does not recognize Siddhartha, but Siddhartha recognizes him. They talk for a bit and Govinda goes on his way.

Staring at the flowing water of the river, Siddhartha is overwhelmed with feelings of joy. Soaking in the beauty around him, he is exceedingly glad he is leaving the life he has lived for years--filled with an excess of possessions, rich foods and fancy clothes.

Part 2: "By the River" Analysis

In this chapter, Hesse summarizes everything that has happened to Siddhartha so far in the book. Commenting on the long journey--spiritually and physically--he has taken to get to where he is now, Siddhartha wonders: "Is it not true, that slowly and through many deviations I changed from a man into a child? From a thinker into an ordinary person?" In his mind, becoming rich, being able to buy fine clothes and living a luxurious life were not at all signs of success as they are for many people in the United States and other countries. Rather, these are evidence to Siddhartha of the empty life he has been living and that, like a child or a "fool," he did not understand the world and his purpose in it. At the same time, Siddhartha recognizes that he needed to go through an extremely painful, "nauseating" process to "experience grace" and "find Atman in himself." Atman is a Buddhist concept that literally means "breath" or "soul." What Siddhartha wants is to be at one with the world, totally at peace.

Once again, Hesse compares Siddhartha's current and past state of mind to that of a child. On the one hand, Hesse says, most adults are like children, in that they play games in business and other parts of their lives and do not understand the world. On the other hand, Siddhartha wants to return to a childlike state in which he can see the beauty and joy in the world, as children do so easily. Ideally, Hesse seems to be saying, we should retain our sense of joy and beauty as adults and avoid getting caught up in the "games" of moneymaking and acquisitiveness that adults seem always to play.

Part 2: "The Ferryman"

Part 2: "The Ferryman" Summary

Siddhartha asks a ferryman to take him across the river. Twenty years have passed, but Siddhartha recognizes that the ferryman is Vasudeva, who took Siddhartha across the river after he left the Samanas. Siddhartha recounts his life for Vasudeva, who listens intently. When Siddhartha is finished, Vasudeva asks Siddhartha if he would like to come live with him and be his assistant. Siddhartha accepts.

Siddhartha becomes radiantly happy living with Vasudeva. Then, one day, Kamala and her young son, Siddhartha's child, are near the ferry when Kamala gets bitten by a snake. Hearing her cries of pain, Vasudeva brings her to his hut, where he and Siddhartha care for her. She gets better enough for a while to talk to Siddhartha, but she is too sick and dies, leaving her son with Siddhartha.

Part 2: "The Ferryman" Analysis

Siddhartha learns many practical skills while he is living with Vasudeva, including how to make oars and take care of the boats. More important, though, he learns how to listen to the river, which he learns has many voices. Among the lessons the river teaches him is that all difficulties can be "conquered" as soon as one conquers time. Listening to the river, he also hears the "voice of life," the word Om. The "lessons" Siddhartha learns from the river and that Hesse teaches the reader of this chapter are also basic tenets or beliefs of Buddhism, including the idea that like the river, humans have a thousand voices that reach back in time and into the future.

This chapter relies heavily on the reader's willingness to accept that certain events are destined to happen, regardless of how unlikely they may be. Thus, Siddhartha meets the same ferryman who took him across the river twenty years earlier and Kamala just happens to get bitten by the snake right near where Siddhartha is living. For Siddhartha's journey of self-discovery to be complete, he must "make peace" with the people in his life who were important, such as Kamala. It was therefore important for Hesse to find a way to bring her back into the story.

Part 2: "The Son"

Part 2: "The Son" Summary

After Kamala dies, Siddhartha's son stays on with his father and Vasudeva. Siddhartha loves his son deeply, but he is troubled and unhappy with the boy, who is arrogant and does not want to work. One day his son turns against his father, and the next morning he is gone. Angry but desperate to find him, Siddhartha and Vasudeva set out to look for the young Siddhartha.

Part 2: "The Son" Analysis

Young Siddhartha is much like many teenagers; he rebels against the life he is forced to live, which in his case is vastly different from the life of luxury he is used to. Although Siddhartha was also eager to leave home when he was a young man, he is unable to understand this need in his son, and, although Siddhartha loves his son very much, he gets upset and angry when his son rebels against him. Like many parents, Siddhartha finds it hard to let go of his son and find his own way in the world.

The main theme of this chapter is "What is love?" Siddhartha struggles to answer this question as he lives with his son, whom he seems to truly love.

Part 2: "Om"

Part 2: "Om" Summary

Siddhartha begins to envy the people around him, who seem so happy. After talking with his dear friend Vasudeva, Siddhartha begins to see the unity or interconnections among all things. Standing at the river, he hears the word *Om*.

Part 2: "Om" Analysis

This chapter reinforces Vasudeva's role as a wise teacher to Siddhartha who, although he had reached a stage of great self-discipline and knowledge, did not recognize the unity of all things. This is a basic Buddhist belief, the idea that all events and all people are interconnected, all like small drops in an ocean or river. The word *Om*, which Siddhartha hears by the river, conveys this sense of unity, or perfection, of all things.

Part 2: "Govinda"

Part 2: "Govinda" Summary

A man requests a ferry ride from Siddhartha across the river and it turns out to be Govinda, Siddhartha's old boyhood friend, whom he has not seen in many years. Govinda asks Siddhartha what knowledge he has acquired, and although Govinda at first thinks that Siddhartha's answer is very strange, Govinda begins to see that his childhood friend is now very wise indeed, like Buddha. Filled with love for Siddhartha, he watches as the peaceful face of his friend turns to thousands of faces of people, fish and animals from the present and the distant past. With tears streaming down his old face, Govinda knows now that his friend is truly holy.

Part 2: "Govinda" Analysis

In this last chapter of his book, Hesse seems to be saying that life's journey is long and hard, and no one can show us the way, but we all have the capacity to find inner peace and contentment if we keep searching and are willing to change directions when we get off track, as Siddhartha did several times. The Buddhist idea that our lives are fleeting or transitory is reinforced here, but so is the notion that we are all part of world made up of often opposite but conflicting elements (good and evil, war and peace, love and hate).

Characters

Buddha Gotama Buddha

Gotama Buddha is said to have brought to a standstill the cycle of rebirth. Before his enlightenment, he first had been an ascetic and then had turned to high living and the pleasures of the world. Siddhartha recognizes his radiance, but, despite his attraction to Gotama, Siddhartha is disinterested in his teaching and will not become a disciple. Siddhartha reminds the Buddha of his own quest for enlightenment, stating, "You have done so by your own seeking, in your own way, through thought, through meditation, through knowledge, through enlightenment. You have learned nothing through teachings, and so I think, O Illustrious One, that nobody finds salvation through teaching. To nobody, O Illustrious One, can you communicate in words and teachings what happened to you in the hour of your enlightenment." This is the central idea of the novel, that one can find the secret of self-realization only by going one's own way.

Gotama Buddha is a fictionalized version of the historical Gotama Buddha (approximately 563 B.C.-483 B.C.), born Prince Siddhartha Gotama. Gotama is the clan name, and Buddha, which means "to know," is the title which his followers gave to him.

Govinda

Govinda is Siddhartha's childhood friend and confidant. He loves everything about Siddhartha— his eyes, his voice, the way he walked, his grace. Govinda becomes Siddhartha's shadow. Like Siddhartha, Govinda must also go his own way. Siddhartha supports his friend's decision when Govinda leaves him to follow Gotama Buddha, stating, "Often I have thought: will Govinda ever take a step without me, from his own conviction? Now, you are a man and have chosen your own path." The friends meet at strategic points in their lives. After Siddhartha has attained eternal bliss, Govinda kisses his forehead, compelled by love and presentiment. It is through this kiss and not through Siddhartha's teaching that Govinda finally attains union with the universal, eternal essence.

Illustrious One

See Buddha Gotama Buddha

Kamala

Kamala, a well known courtesan, is beseeched by Siddhartha to teach him her art. She understands him more than even Govinda has; they are mirror images of each other. As Siddhartha tells her, "You are like me; you are different from other people. You are Kamala and no one else, and within you there is a stillness and sanctuary to which you

can retreat any time and be yourself, just as I can. Few people have that capacity and yet everyone could have it." When she accuses Siddhartha of remaining a Samana in that he really loves no one, he acquiesces with the observation that "I am like you. You cannot love either, otherwise how could you practice love as an art? Perhaps people like us cannot love." But a time comes when she cannot hear enough about Gotama. Prophetically, she sighs, "One day, perhaps soon, I will also become a follower of this Buddha. I will give him my pleasure garden and take refuge in his teachings." When Siddhartha leaves, she is not surprised. She frees her caged bird and retires from her previous way of life. Having given birth to Siddhartha's son, she takes refuge in the teachings of Gotama. Years later, on hearing of the Buddha's impending death, she travels to see him. To appease her complaining son, she rests along the way near a river, the river where Siddhartha has become a ferryman. Kamala is bitten fatally by a snake; reunited with Siddhartha, she finds peace as she dies by looking into Siddhartha's eyes.

Kamaswami

Kamaswami's name, which means "master of the material world," is an appropriate one for the rich merchant who employs Siddhartha. He is beginning to grow old, and Kamala implies, Siddhartha could become his successor. For twenty years, Siddhartha masters this life only to despair. Thinking of his father, Govinda, and Gotama, he wonders if he had left all of them in order to become a "kamaswami." Unlike Kamala, Kamaswami cannot understand that Siddhartha leaves his life of luxury willfully.

Perfect One

See Buddha Gotama Buddha

Sakyamuni

See Buddha Gotama Buddha

Samanas

The Samanas are wandering ascetics who practice self-denial and meditation. Fasting for days and sleeping naked in forests, they shun beauty, sensuality, and happiness as illusions and lies. They have only one goal, to become empty of thirst, desire, dreams, pleasure, and sorrow, and, thus, to let the Self die. Only this, they feel, will provide the experience of peace and pure thought, an awakening of the innermost Being that is no longer Self. Siddhartha is attracted to their ways, and, along with Govinda, travels with the Samanas for three years.

Siddhartha

Siddhartha is the precocious son of a Brahman, a member of the highest caste in Hinduism. Beloved by all but unable to find inner peace, he begins his personal search. Abandoning his devout father, he joins the Samanas. Although he learns some skills of spiritual survival from the Samanas, including thinking, waiting, and fasting, he concludes that asceticism is merely an escape from experience.

Siddhartha meets with Gotama the Buddha, who has reached that perfect state of being in which the transmigratory life cycle and agony of time are transcended. However, Siddhartha realizes that no spiritual teaching or doctrine can impart what he wants. He believes teachers and scripture have yielded only second-hand learning, not the firsthand experience from which real knowledge emanates. Thus, Siddhartha embarks on a life of pleasure with Kamala, who shows him the ways of carnal pleasures, and Kamaswami, who introduces him to the ways of material pursuits.

Decades later, Siddhartha feels worthless and alone. Realizing that he has traded his pursuit of Nirvana for its polar opposite, "Sansara," or the world of illusion, spiritual death, and ultimate despair, Siddhartha understands that the cause of his soul sickness is his inability to love.

Sidhartha turns to Vasudeva, the quiet ferryman, and learns from the river. Years of bliss are interrupted by a final encounter with Kamala and the son whom she bore Siddhartha, unbeknownst to him. Siddhartha loves his son, clings to him, and is desolate when he runs away. Again, Siddhartha listens to the river and hears the unity of voices and the word "Om," or perfection. From then on, Siddhartha is in harmony with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, belonging to the unity of all things.

Hesse gives his protagonist the Buddha's personal Sanskrit name, Siddhartha, meaning "he who is on the right road" or "he who has achieved his goal." Hesse does not intend to portray the life of the Buddha but instead attempts to prefigure the pattern of his own hero's transformations. Both Siddharthas, Hesse's character and the religious figure, were unusual children. Buddha left his wife and son to become an ascetic, as Siddhartha leaves his beloved Kamala and his unborn son to take up the contemplative life. Both spent time among mendicant ascetics studying yoga. Buddha spent several years meditating by a river, and Siddhartha's last years are spent in ferryman's service on a river. Buddha's revelations came to him under a fig tree, whereas Siddhartha arrives at his final decision under a mango tree. Buddha had a visionary experience of all his previous existences and the interconnection of all things, and Siddhartha's final vision also embraces simultaneity and oneness.

Siddhartha's Father

Siddhartha's father, a handsome, teaching Brahman who practices meditation and ablutions in the river, is filled with pride because of his son, who is intelligent and thirsting for knowledge. The author's father, a clergyman, performed ritual ablutions

similar to those practiced by Hesse's fictional creation of Sidhartha's father. Siddhartha's father sees his son growing up to be a great learned man— a priest, a prince among Brahmans. As a Brahman, he does not try to control his son through forceful and angry words, but when Siddhartha requests permission to follow the ways of the Samana, he is displeased.

Vasudeva

Vasudeva is another name for Krishna, who is the teacher of Arjuna, the principal hero of the *Bhagavad Gita* and a human incarnation of Vishnu, a Hindu deity. Vasudeva's name means "he in who all thinks abide and who abides in all." Siddhartha's first encounter with Vasudeva, the ferryman, occurs just after he departs from Gotama and Govinda. When Siddhartha remarks on the river's beauty, Vasudeva responds, "I love it above everything. I have often listened to it, gazed at it, and I have always learned something from it. One can learn much from a river." He predicts Siddhartha's return.

More than twenty years pass before Siddhartha does return to the river and contemplates suicide. When the river revives his spirit, Siddhartha determines to remain near it. Remembering the ferryman who so loved the river, he asks to become Vasudeva's apprentice. Vasudeva tells him, "You will learn, but not from me. The river has taught me to listen; you will learn it too." As time goes on, Siddhartha's smile begins to resemble Vasudeva's— radiant, childlike, filled with happiness. Travellers mistake them for brothers; sometimes, when they sit listening together to the river, they have the same thought.

When Siddhartha becomes distressed by his son's rebellion, Vasudeva encourages him to listen to the river and reminds him that he, too, left his own father to begin his path through life. After the young boy runs away, Vasudeva brings Siddhartha to the river so that he can hear that the "great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word: Om— perfection." When Vasudeva sees the look of serenity and knowledge shining in Siddhartha's eyes, he knows that it is time for him to go. "I have waited for this hour, my friend. Now that it has arrived, let me go. I have been Vasudeva, the ferryman, for a long time. Now it is over. Farewell hut, farewell river, farewell Siddhartha." Vasudeva then departs for the woods and the unity of all things.

Young Siddhartha

Raised without a father as a rich and spoiled mama's boy, young Siddhartha meets his father for the first time just before the death of his mother, Kamala. Disdaining his father's piety and simple lifestyle, the boy is arrogant and disrespectful. Finding his father's unconditional love and patience impossible to accept, he runs away. When Vasudeva reminds Siddhartha that his son must follow his own path, Siddhartha makes peace with his spirit.

Themes

The Search for the Meaning of Life

Hesse's works are largely confessional and autobiographical and deal with questions of "Weltanschauung," of a philosophy of life. Typically, as in *Siddhartha*, the individual's search for truth and identity through what Hesse called the "inward journey" is draped around the plot. Siddhartha, the obedient son of a rich Brahman, awakens one day to the realization that his life is empty and that his soul is not satisfied by his devotion to duty and strict observances of religious ordinances. He leaves home with his friend Govinda to begin his journey. First, he becomes an ascetic mendicant, but fasting and physical deprivation do not bring him closer to peace. Subsequently, he speaks with Gotama Buddha, who has attained the blissful state of Nirvana. Siddhartha realizes that he cannot accept the Buddhist doctrine of salvation from suffering or learn through the Buddha's teaching. He must proceed on his own path. Turning from asceticism, he lives a life of desire and sensual excitement but years later again finds himself disgusted and empty. Suicidal, Siddhartha finds his way back to a river he had once crossed. He stays there, learning from the ferryman to listen to the river. It is here that he finally achieves peace.

In Siddhartha's final conversation with Govinda, he tries to enumerate the insights he has gained. These include the idea that for each truth the opposite is equally true; that excessive searching— as practised by Govinda—is self-defeating; and that to "find" is, paradoxically, "to be free, to be open, to have no goal." One must simply love and enjoy the world in all its aspects. Although Siddhartha may have reached the highest state of wisdom, he is unable to communicate its essence to Govinda. For another of his realizations is that although knowledge may be communicable, wisdom cannot be. He tells Govinda, "These are things and one can love things. But one cannot love words□. Perhaps that is what prevents you from finding peace, perhaps there are too many words, for even salvation and virtue. Samsara and Nirvana are only words, Govinda." It is only in an act of love, when Govinda kisses Siddhartha, that he too sees the "continuous stream of faces—hundreds, thousands, which all came and disappeared and yet all seemed to be there at the same time, which all continually changed and renewed themselves and which were yet all Siddhartha."

Although *Siddhartha* is set in India and engages with Buddhist thought, it would be naive to read the book as an embodiment or explanation of Indian philosophy. Written after World War I, *Siddhartha* is Hesse's attempt to restore his faith in mankind, to regain his lost peace of mind, and to find again a harmonious relationship with his world. Siddhartha's way is his own, not Govinda's nor Buddha's nor even Hesse's, whose next major work, *Steppenwolf*, offers a complete contrast, replacing serenity with stridency, placing the individual problem in a social context, and stressing the contrast between the "inner" and "outer" worlds for grotesque and humorous effect.

Polarities and Synthesis

Hesse is fascinated by the dualistic nature of existence, particularly the world of the mind, which he calls "Geist," and the world of the body and physical action, which he calls "Natur." Siddhartha experiments with and exhausts both possibilities. In his father's house, he exercises his mind. With the Samanas, he seeks truth again through thinking and the extreme denial of the body. When these efforts fail to bring him peace, he tries another extreme. He immerses himself in material and carnal pursuits, but this life of the body brings him no closer to his goal. When he takes up his life by the river, he learns to transcend both the mind and the body by finding a third way, that of the soul. This synthesis, in fact, is what distinguishes Hesse's Siddhartha from Buddha. For Hesse, the river has part in both realms; it is not an obstacle to be crossed, as in Buddhist symbolism. Rather, Siddhartha is a ferryman who joins both sides of the river, which is the natural synthesis of extremes.

Love and Passion

The importance of love also distinguishes Hesse's Siddhartha from Buddhism. In 1931, Hesse commented, "The fact that my *Siddhartha* stresses not cognition but love, that it rejects dogma and makes experience of oneness the central point, may be felt as a tendency to return to Christianity, even to a truly Protestant faith." In many ways, the novel is about Siddhartha's learning to love the world in its particulars so that he can transcend them. The reader sees him in town with Kamala as they indulge their pleasures. "I am like you," he laments to her. "You cannot love either, otherwise how could you practice love as an art. Perhaps people like us cannot love." But in the end, Kamala gives up her life and follows the ways of the Buddha. On her pilgrimage, she is reunited with Siddhartha and, looking into his eyes before she dies, finds peace. Siddhartha feels keenly the loss of Kamala, but it is not sadness that is in his heart; he knows now that all life is indestructible and that, in a wider sense, Kamala has entered a new life that is in every blossom and in every breeze about him. Kamala also leaves Siddhartha with their son to love. "He felt indeed that this love, this blind love for his son, was a very human passion, that it was Samsara, a troubled spring of deep water. At the same time he felt that it was not worthless, that it was necessary, that it came from his own nature. This emotion, this pain, these follies also had to be experienced." Through Kamala and his son, Siddhartha learns to love the world. He tells Govinda, "I learned through my body and soul that it was necessary for me to sin, that I needed lust, that I had to strive for property and experience nausea and the depths of despair in order to learn not to resist them, in order to learn to love the world, and no longer compare it with some kind of desired imaginary world, some imaginary vision of perfection, but to leave it as it is, to love it and be glad to belong to it."

Om—Oneness, Totality, Unity

When Siddhartha despairs of ever finding peace, he contemplates suicide at the river. When the word "Om" comes to mind, he realizes the folly of his attempt to end his

sufferings by extinguishing his physical being. Life is indestructible. Creation is an indivisible whole. He sees his great mistake in trying always to do something instead of just to be. Siddhartha comes to believe that all possible transformations or potentialities of the human soul are possible not only consecutively, but simultaneously. He explains this idea to Govinda by using the example of the stone: "This stone is stone; it is also animal, God, Buddha. I do not respect and love it because it was one thing and will become something else, but because it has already long been everything and always is everything. I love it just because it is a stone, because today and now it appears to me a stone." Siddhartha's Nirvana is the recognition that all being exists simultaneously in unity and totality.

Style

Setting

Hesse locates his tale in remote India of a time long past, but any realism in the narrative is the symbolic projection of an inner vision, an inner world, an "inward journey," and not an attempt to capture external reality. Hesse, in fact, criticized the tendency to attribute excessive importance to "so-called reality" in the shape of physical events. He intended to take his readers into an elevated, poetic, legendary or "magical" world. Using the landscape of India, the book achieves a unity of style, structure, and meaning that Hesse never again attained with such perfection. He called *Siddhartha* "an Indic poem"; some might call it an extreme of symbolic lyricism. The Indian milieu provides timeless, mythic validity—the legendary times allow the reader to lose the sense of differentiation and to come nearer to the oneness of the human race. The parallels to the Buddha's life are contributing factors to this legendary quality.

Style

Hesse uses an exotically formalized style, more noticeable in the original German but still apparent even in translation. The novel is borne along on a strong rhythmic current (like a river), on what seems an undertone of chant. All harsh sounds are avoided, while there is much alliteration and assonance. There is frequent use of parallelism in clause structure and repetition of words and phrases. The threefold repetitions, corresponding to the tripartite structure of the work, creates a liturgical aspect which is reminiscent of the Bible, but the language is not really biblical but rather reminiscent of Pali, the language used in the canonical books of the Buddhists. At points this language can achieve something of an incantatory effect, but for the most part it reflects the serene, balanced attitude of meditation. This antiquated, liturgical mode of expression enhances the gospel quality of this tale.

Structure

The short novel is divided into two parts with four and eight chapters. But it is quite obvious that the book falls into three thematic sections: Siddhartha's life at home, among the Samanas and with Buddha (four chapters); his life with Kamala and among the "child people" of the city (four chapters); and his life with Vasudeva on the river (four chapters). The river, which is the allencompassing symbol of the novel, not only bears the burden of communication of truth but also provides the organizing structure. Temporally and spatially, the three parts of Siddhartha's search for meaning are delimited by his encounters with the river. These divisions are in keeping with Siddhartha's balanced progression from the realm of the mind, through that of the body, to that of the soul. The triadic structure is extended to the very mechanics of expression: to sentences, clauses, phrases, words, and paragraphs. And in keeping with this three-

beat pulsation, Hesse even extends his customary projection of the actual self and one alternative to the actual self and three possibilities. Siddhartha is Hesse's fictionalized self and Govinda, Buddha, and Vasudeva are the possibilities: Govinda is the self-effacing, institutionoriented person Siddhartha should not become; Buddha represents a laudable but undesirable lifedenying model; and Vasudeva is an exemplary lifeaffirming ideal. When Siddhartha becomes this ideal, Vasudeva leaves the scene.

The novel's structure is also determined in part by its legendary form. Siddhartha is clearly regarded as a "saintly" figure. His reunification with the All at the end of the book corresponds to the miraculous union with God in Christian legends. As in Christian canonization trials, his saintliness is attested by witnesses—Vasudeva, Kamala, and Govinda—all of whom recognize in his face the aspect of godliness and repose.

Symbols

Often in literature, from Heraclitus to Thomas Wolfe, rivers are used as a symbol for timelessness. In Hesse's case this symbol of simultaneity is expanded to include the realm in which all polarity ceases: totality. It is a realm of pure existence in which all things coexist in harmony. Siddhartha expresses this idea of fluidity: "of every truth it can be said that the opposite is just as true." Siddhartha, as ferryman, helps people to cross the water which separates the city, the outer world of extroversion, superficial excitement, and wild pleasures, from the introverted, lonely, and ascetic world of forests and mountains. Siddhartha has himself crossed that river twice in the course of his search, and he has managed to reconcile those two worlds. The river with the city on one side and the forest on the other is a projection of Siddhartha's inner development onto the realm of space. In this way, the geography of the book becomes the landscape of the soul. In the final vision of the book, Hesse renders Siddhartha's fulfillment visually by reversing this process. As Govinda looks into Siddhartha's face at the end, what he perceives is no longer the landscape of the soul but rather the soul as landscape. Siddhartha has learned the lesson of the river so well that his entire being now reflects the totality and simultaneity that the river symbolizes. Govinda "no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha. Instead he saw other faces, many faces, a long series, a continuous stream of faces—hundreds, thousands, which all came and disappeared and yet all seemed to be there at the same time, which all continually changed and renewed themselves and which were yet all Siddhartha."

Historical Context

Ancient India

In the fifth century B.C., India consisted of sixteen major states in the north. The region's southern parts remained largely undeveloped. Kings or chiefs ruled individual states and acquired income through taxation and trade. The Brahmans, or religious leaders, held a very high position in each state and often had the authority to approve of the ruling class. On some occasions they were rulers themselves. In addition to the major states, there were dozens of smaller regions comprised of various tribes organized as oligarchies, each under a single ruling family. One of these oligarchies, in what is now Nepal, was ruled by the Shakya tribe, of which Siddhartha Gotama was a prince. Control of the Ganges Valley became a major issue between the northern Indian states during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., and wars were continually fought over the rights to the lucrative trade routes. The state of Magadha established dominance in the region by the mid-fifth century B.C., but infighting continued into the next century. The nation of India was not unified until the establishment of the Mauryan Empire in 325 B.C.

The Story of Buddha

Siddhartha Gotama, who became known as Buddha, meaning the "Illustrious One" or "Enlightened One," founded Buddhism in approximately 500 B.C. Raised as a Brahman prince, he was married at sixteen to a neighboring princess, Yasodhara, who bore him at least one child. Despite his comfortable, even luxurious circumstances, a discontent grew in him. At the age of twenty-nine, he left home against his parents' will and began a spiritual quest.

At that time, wandering ascetics, who were also searching for a deeper meaning to life, travelled across northern India. They sought inner peace and freedom from attachment to the ordinary things of this world through the then-developing discipline of yoga. They came to be deeply respected by ordinary Indians. It is against this background that Siddhartha began his Great Renunciation. He meditated and practiced the extreme bodily asceticism which the Jains and others were advocating. He learned to "think, wait, and fast," but after six years he did not achieve enlightenment and, at the age of thirty-five, he abandoned the ascetic life and went to a place now called Bodh-Gaya, near the town of Uruvilva. He sat down to meditate at the foot of a fig tree, later to be referred to as the *bodhi* (enlightenment tree). The enlightenment he received was a profound awareness that all things are mutable, impermanent, insubstantial, and sorrowful, but that human beings tend to become attached to things as though they were substantial, abiding realities. Then, as the objects of these attachment disintegrate, humans are thrown into a state of panic and anguish. The Buddha was convinced that this insight would release him from craving and, by following the Middle Way between extremes of indulgence and denial, he could end the negative cycle of rebirths and free himself from the wheel of life.

Siddhartha promoted concepts of peace, love, and passive behavior as well as respect for all life. His teachings, known as the *dharma*, emerged in opposition to the violence, suffering, and inequality he witnessed in Indian society. He specifically denounced the Brahmans, who were supposed to be the spiritual and moral guides of society, for their participation in the killing of animals and for sanctioning war. He also felt that the caste system resulted in suffering and devalued life. The system, some of which remains in place to this day, is directly opposed to Buddhist beliefs in social equality and freedom of choice. Siddhartha, though of the highest Brahman caste himself, taught that all people are born equal and that everyone must fulfill his or her own destiny, which cannot be dictated by another.

During the forty-five years between the Buddha's enlightenment and death, he traveled and preached in central India and won many converts to the religion. After the Buddha's death, the Mallas of Kusinagara took his body, honored it with flowers, scents, and music, and then cremated it. The remains were divided among eight of the peoples of central India, who took their shares and constructed *stupas* (reliquary monuments) for them. These monuments were the forerunners of others that were later erected throughout India and that served as the centers for Buddhist devotees.

Turn-of-the-Century Germany

As the twentieth century began, Germany was marked by rapid industrialization. From 1895 to 1907, the number of industrial employees doubled and exports of finished goods rose from thirty-three to sixty-three percent. National wealth and urban populations soared, as did national pride. But working conditions were poor and industrial workers lacked full political rights. In Germany's social hierarchy, industrial workers and minorities were regarded as subservient members of society. When the economy slowed or cities became overpopulated, anti-Semitism surfaced and Jews were seen as outsiders.

By 1912 the German government had become increasingly militaristic and aggressive. The country's navy was second in might only to Great Britain's, and because of their newfound economic and military power, Germany began taking on the role of aggressor throughout Europe and North Africa. France, Great Britain, and Russia formed the Triple Entente alliance to ward off the potential threat of a German invasion. World War I erupted, though, after the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was assassinated by Serbian terrorists in 1914. The members of the Triple Entente found themselves in a fierce battle against a powerful German nation.

In 1918 World War I ended with German defeat. But it was not long before nationalism and aggression resurfaced in Germany. Capitalizing on the nation's desire to regain power after its loss, Adolf Hitler and fellow Nazis instilled strong feelings of anti-Semitism and fierce national pride in the German population. By 1921, Germany's government was denouncing writers such as Hesse, calling him and others "Jew-lovers" because of their anti-war and anti-prejudice view.

Critical Overview

After the 1904 publication of *Peter Camenzind*, Hermann Hesse's following grew with each subsequent book and began a popularity that rose and fell dramatically, as it still seems to continue to do. German readers felt comfortable with his traditional stories and poetry, and by 1914, when World War I broke out, he had become a pleasant reading habit. The tide changed with his wartime essays, which disparaged militarism and nationalism and censured Germany. Hesse was quickly reduced to an undesirable draft dodger and traitor. In the sociopolitically chaotic postwar years, the tide turned back. The apotheosizing of the individual and the apolitical gospel of self-knowledge and self-realization presented in *Demian* (published in 1919) struck a respondent chord in German youth, for whom Hesse became their idol and *Demian* their bible. But youth's exaltation was short-lived; spreading communism on one hand and budding National Socialism on the other proved to be too enticing. During the Weimar Republic, from 1919 to 1933, Hesse's popularity declined. By the mid 1930s, he was on the blacklist of virtually every newspaper and periodical in Germany. The scholarly interest in him also grew progressively less favorable and politically—tainted negative criticism began to be heard. Hesse now became a rank "Jewlover" and an example of the insidious poisoning of the German soul by Freud's psychoanalysis. This trend culminated in the strident political and literary rejection of Hesse in Hitler's Germany between 1933 and 1945.

With the collapse of National Socialism in 1945 and Hesse's Nobel Prize in 1946, German critics and scholars, like Germany's reading public, rediscovered the author. For the next decade, he enjoyed both political and literary approval as never before. An undesirable German of questionable literary merits had become a man of insight, foresight, and humanity, an heir to the noblest heritage of the German people, a guide and inspiration for his fellow authors. Yet again, the fickle German literary community switched gears. By the late 1950s, there was a sudden and sharp decrease in scholarly and public interest and by the 1960s, Hesse was virtually dead as a writer of importance in Germany. But still another wave of interest in Hesse began to spread in Germany in the early 1970s. The occasion of this last revival, in which many of the most discerning studies of his work were done, was in large part the discovery of Hesse in America in the 1960s.

When Hesse was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1946, the English-speaking world barely knew who he was. His few translated works had not been well received. *Demian* (translated into English in 1923) was brushed aside as a "nightmare of abnormality, a crazed dream of a paranoiac." *Steppenwolf* (translated in 1929) was disposed of as "a peculiarly unappetizing conglomeration of fantasy, philosophy, and moist eroticism." In the 1950s, after Hesse won the Nobel Prize, publishers began scrambling for translations of his work, including *Siddhartha*, which was translated in 1951. Hesse himself was doubtful that the American public would ever be taken by his inward-directed individualism and, for a time, he seemed correct. In the 1960s, however, the American public became intrigued by Hesse. Those in middle age were disenchanted and the youth were rebellious. Skepticism and cynicism were widespread. For many, and for its youth in particular, America had become a stifling, excessively materialistic,

morally and culturally bankrupt society. Hesse's individualism—his disparagement of modern society but firm faith in the meaningfulness of life—were a welcome antidote to the twentieth century's bleaker view of things. Hesse became a rallying point for protest and change, a kindred soul, an inspiration for an enthusiastic following of dissidents, seekers, and estranged loners who were drawn from both the establishment and the counterculture. By the time all of Hesse's novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and letters were available in English in the 1970s, the tide that had swept across America in the mid-1960s had peaked, but not before almost fifteen million copies of Hesse's works had been sold within a decade—a literary phenomenon without precedent in America.

American Hesse scholarship followed in the wake of the general public's attraction to him. Scholarly activity accelerated in the mid-1960s and crested in 1973-74, a few years after the reading community had already begun to lose its interest. Scholarly activity tapered off to a slow but steady flow. Still, American Hesse scholarship is now second in quantity only to its German counterpart and has outstripped it in quality.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Bennett, a doctoral student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and adjunct instructor in English, explains that while Siddhartha draws heavily from Eastern religions in its themes, Hesse's philosophy diverges in some ways, and the author concludes that one's philosophy is a personal journey for each individual to discover.

Clearly, the most obvious and significant aspect of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is its use of images, themes, and ideas drawn from Eastern religions. Having both traveled to India and studied extensively about Indian religions, Hesse was able to integrate a substantial understanding of Eastern religious traditions into his novel. In fact, *Siddhartha* does such a good job of developing Eastern religious themes that it has been published in India, and Indian critics have generally praised its sensitive understanding of their religious traditions.

From beginning to end, virtually every aspect of *Siddhartha* develops out of Hesse's knowledge of Eastern religions. For example, many of the characters are named after either Hindu or Buddhist gods:

Siddhartha is the personal name of the Buddha, Vasudeva is one of the names of Krishna, and Kamala's name is derived from Kama, the Hindu god of erotic love. In addition, Hesse bases most of the novel's themes on various Hindu or Buddhist principles. For example, Siddhartha seeks to gain an understanding of both Atman, the individual soul, and Brahma, the universal soul that unifies all beings. In order to achieve this understanding, however, he must experience a vision that reveals to him the true meaning of *Om*, the sacred word that Hindus chant when meditating upon the cosmic unity of all life. The vast majority of Siddhartha's philosophical and religious questions develops out of his attempt to understand these religious principles or other themes drawn from Eastern religions such as meditation, fasting, renunciation, timelessness, transcending suffering, etc. While it would take an entire book to explain all of the religious ideas that Hesse develops in his novel, he generally presents at least a basic description of these ideas within the book itself. Consequently, readers can at least get a rudimentary understanding of these ideas even if they do not understand all of the subtle complexities of Eastern religious thought.

Not only does Hesse borrow names, themes, and ideas from Eastern religions, but he also bases and structures his narrative on the life of the historical Buddha. Much like Siddhartha in Hesse's novel, the historical Buddha was born into a wealthy family, but he renounced his wealth to live as an ascetic. After several years of self-denial, however, he came to realize the errors of asceticism. After leaving behind his austere life, he meditated under a Bodhi tree until he received Nirvana (or complete Enlightenment), and then he spent the rest of his life trying to help others reach Nirvana. This is very similar to the path that Siddhartha follows in the novel as he passes through similar stages of wealth, renunciation, meditation, enlightenment, and striving to teach others.

In addition to structuring the novel according to the Buddha's life, Hesse also structures the novel according to various principles found in the Buddha's teachings. In fact, several of the chapters are named after specific religious principles. For example, the chapter titled "Awakening" describes how Siddhartha comes to recognize the Buddhist belief that the path to enlightenment must be rooted in the here and now instead of focusing on other distant or transcendent worlds. In addition, the chapter titled "Samsara" describes how Siddhartha is caught in a continuous cycle of death and rebirth because he has not yet achieved a state of total enlightenment or Nirvana, and the chapter titled "Om" describes how Siddhartha eventually escapes from Samsara to achieve a vision of the essential unity of all things. These chapter titles accurately describe the spiritual development that Siddhartha undergoes in each chapter, and these stages of spiritual development provide the structure that organizes both the novel's development as a narrative and Siddhartha's development as a character. Even the chapters that are not titled after a specific religious principle usually represent Siddhartha's progress toward understanding some religious principle, and many of these principles are taken directly from the Buddha's teachings about the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path.

Nevertheless, even though Hesse develops both his themes and his narrative structure based on Eastern religious principles, there are several ways in which *Siddhartha* alters these concepts so that it is not simply an accurate description of Hinduism or Buddhism. For example, when the Buddha teaches Siddhartha about his religious beliefs, Siddhartha admires them, but he does not choose to follow them. Similarly, the historical Buddha finds enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, but Siddhartha's dream under the tree only helps him better understand the questions that he is seeking to understand. It provides him with new issues to consider, but it does not give him any final answers. In these respects, Hesse seems to suggest that he considers Eastern religions very useful guides to philosophical and spiritual understanding but ultimately considers knowledge a personal experience that cannot be codified into any religious rituals and dogmas. The conclusion to the novel makes this clear, when Siddhartha explains his fundamental distrust of all words and beliefs. He still embraces the goal of enlightenment and universal oneness, but he follows his own personal path instead of just following the Buddha's or anyone else's doctrines. In this sense, Hesse's novel develops an individualistic perspective that is perhaps more Western than Eastern. Because of these kinds of western elements, critics such as Mark Boulby, Robert Conrad, and Theodore Ziolkowski argue that *Siddhartha* advances more Western ideas than it does Eastern ones.

Although *Siddhartha* explores a wide variety of philosophical and religious themes, it focuses most specifically on three principal themes: the nature of the self, the nature of knowledge, and the essential unity of all things. From the very beginning of the novel, Siddhartha has a fierce longing to probe beneath the surface of life and discover the deeper layers of the self. Consequently, he refuses to simply follow the paths established by various religions—not because these religions are bad but because they focus on external rather that internal beliefs. Siddhartha is more interested in understanding his own self than he is in simply following the ideas created by others. As the novel progresses, Siddhartha explores deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the

self as he rejects his home, his friend Govinda, all religious dogmas, and everything else that might cause him to compromise his intense personal vision. As Siddhartha abandons these hindrances to self-knowledge, he comes to understand the essential mysteries of the self.

In addition, Siddhartha is deeply concerned with the question of knowledge. Throughout the novel, he asks deep questions about the nature of knowledge: what is knowledge, how is it obtained, and how can it be taught to others? In fact, much of Hesse's interest in the self is intimately connected to his interest in the nature of knowledge since Hesse develops a view of knowledge that makes the self the primary means of discovering knowledge. Because Hesse locates the origin of knowledge in the self rather than in some set of beliefs, he is distrustful of any attempt to communicate or teach knowledge to others. As Siddhartha explains to the Buddha after listening to his teachings, even if a person has experienced some vision of the essential nature of life, they cannot give that knowledge to someone else because they cannot give someone else the experiences through which they obtained their knowledge. They can talk about the ideas they have learned and the principles they believe, but they cannot communicate their personal experiences, aspects which Hesse believes are the most important part of knowledge.

By the end of the novel, Siddhartha has progressed to a point where the first two questions of the self and knowledge have become less important because he increasingly focuses on understanding the essential unity of all things. As Siddhartha explains to Govinda at the end of the novel, the self is a transitory being whose ultimate meaning can only be found by understanding its connection to all other beings instead of by exploring its own isolated, transitory, individual existence. Siddhartha experiences a vision of this oneness of life while he is meditating on the river. During this visionary experience, he comes to realize that endless flowing of the river symbolizes how all of the various forms and aspects of life flow into each other to form a single whole. The river, like Brahman and Buddha-nature, encompasses the entirety of existence in all of its diverse manifestations, and the meaning of this essential unity is best expressed through the sacred Hindu word, "Om." This word expresses a unity that transcends all barriers of time, difference, oppositions, and illusions to recognize the interconnectedness of all beings. While some critics see this final epiphany as expressing the essence of Eastern religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism, others see it as representing western philosophies such as Christianity or existentialism. Some even see it as Hesse's own personal religion, made up from an eclectic mixture of all of these traditions. Certainly, a good case can be made for each interpretation, so every reader must ultimately come to his or her own conclusion regarding how to interpret Siddhartha's final epiphany. In the end, however, it is perhaps less important to decide how to categorize Siddhartha's vision than to listen to it, think about it, and try to learn from it. Whatever its source, it offers profound insights into the human condition. Consequently, regardless of how it is interpreted, Siddhartha's vision presents a remarkable exploration of the deepest philosophical and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Source: Robert Bennett, in an essay for *Novels for Students*,Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

In this excerpt, Ziolkowski explores the epiphanies that Siddhartha experiences.

Siddhartha's smile □ is the best example of the new dimension that we find in this novel. Here, in brief, we have the same story that we encountered in *Demian*: a man's search for himself through the stages of guilt, alienation, despair, to the experience of unity. The new element here is the insistence upon love as the synthesizing agent. Hesse regards this element as "natural growth and development" from his earlier beliefs, and certainly has no reversal or change of opinion. In the essay "My Faith" (1931) he admitted "that my *Siddhartha* puts not cognition, but love in first place: that it disdains dogma and makes the experience of unity the central point□." Cognition of unity as in *Demian* is not the ultimate goal, but rather the loving affirmation of the essential unity behind the apparent polarity of being. This is the meaning of Siddhartha's transfiguration at the end of the book. The passage goes on at length, developing all the images of horizontal breadth in space and vertical depth in time that we have indicated. But the whole vision is encompassed and united by "this smile of unity over the streaming shapes, this smile of simultaneity over the thousands of births and deaths."

The beatific smile is the symbol of fulfillment: the visual manifestation of the inner achievement. As a symbol, it too is developed and anticipated before the final scene in which Govinda sees it in Siddhartha's face. It is the outstanding characteristic of the two other figures in the book who have attained peace: Buddha and Vasudeva. When Siddhartha first sees Gautama he notices immediately that his face reveals neither happiness nor sadness, but seems rather "to smile gently inward." Everything about him, "his face and his step, his quietly lowered gaze, his quietly hanging hand, and even every finger on this quiet hand spoke of peace, spoke of perfection." When Siddhartha departs from the Buddha he thinks to himself:

I have never seen a man gaze and smile, sit and walk like that.□ truly, I wish that I too might be able to gaze and smile, sit and walk like him.□ Only a man who has penetrated into his innermost Self gazes and walks in that way. Very well—I too shall seek to penetrate into my innermost Self.

Siddhartha acknowledges in the Buddha a conscious ideal, but it is Buddha's goal and not his path to which the younger man aspires. The symbol of this goal is the beatific smile behind which, almost like the smile of the Cheshire Cat, the individual disappears. The same smile appears again when Vasudeva is portrayed, and we see it grow on Siddhartha's own face.

And gradually his smile became more and more like that of the ferryman; it became almost as radiant, almost as illumined with happiness, similarly glowing from a thousand little wrinkles, just as childlike, just as aged. Many travelers, when they saw the two ferrymen, took them to be brothers.

At the moment of Vasudeva's death the unity of this smile is clearly expressed: "His smile shone radiantly as he looked at his friend, and radiantly shone on Siddhartha's face, too, the same smile." The words here are not used in a figurative sense, for it literally is the same smile. The smile is the symbol of inner perfection, but inner perfection for Hesse means the awareness of the unity, totality, and simultaneity of all being. It is thus appropriate that the three men who share this perception should also share the same beatific smile, even though each reached his goal by following a completely different path.□

Siddhartha's development to the point of loving affirmation is marked by a technique of modern fiction that James Joyce defined as the epiphany, but which occurs regularly in much prose, German and French as well as English, of the early twentieth century. In the epiphany the protagonist perceives the essence of things that lies hidden behind their empirical reality, and as such the epiphany is another symptom of the modern turn away from realism toward a new mysticism. The epiphany reveals the essential integral unity of a given object in a burst of radiance (what Joyce, in the words of Aquinas, calls the *integritas, consonantia*, and *claritas* of the object), and the observer is able to enter into a direct relationship of love with the object thus newly perceived. It is this element of loving perception, missing in the cooler cognition of *Demian*, that we find here in passage after passage. The most striking example occurs in the "awakening" scene of Chapter 4 after Siddhartha has made up his mind not to follow Buddha, but to seek his own way in the world of the senses:

He looked around as though he were seeing the world for the first time. Lovely was the world, colorful was the world, strange and mysterious was the world! Here was blue, here was yellow, here was green. The sky flowed and the river, the forest towered up and the mountains, everything lovely, everything mysterious, and magical, and in the midst of it all—he, Siddhartha, the Awakening One, on the way to himself. All this, all this yellow and blue, river and forest, entered Siddhartha for the first time through his eyes, was no longer the magic of Mara, no longer the veil of Maja, no longer the senseless and accidental multiplicity of the world of appearances, contemptible for the deep-thinking Brahman who disparages multiplicity and seeks unity. Blue was blue, the river was river, and even if the One and the Divine lay hidden in the blue and river within Siddhartha, it was still simply the manner of the Divine to be yellow here, blue here, sky there, forest there, and Siddhartha here. Sense and Essence were not somewhere behind the things. They were in them—in everything.

The points to be noticed in this and other epiphanies (including, of course, those written by the young Joyce) are, first, the impression of radiance aroused by the entire description, which here is created largely by words such as "blue," "yellow," and "sky." Then: these are all objects encountered constantly in daily life, but here *perceived* for the first time. And finally: what Siddhartha realizes is that the meaning of these things is inherent within them and not some abstract ideal that lies behind their reality. They are radiant and meaningful as manifestations of the One and the Divine, hence as symbols of unity and totality.

A further characteristic of the epiphany—one that is inherent in its very nature but not usually present in the actual epiphany scene—is the subject's feeling that words, phrases, and concepts detract from our ultimate perception of the object, that they lie as a veil between the viewer and true reality. (This is a syndrome that we discussed earlier as the language crisis.) In *Siddhartha*, as well as Hesse's works in general, we find this attitude, which provides the background for the experience of the epiphany. Siddhartha's final interview with Govinda makes it clear that he has been able to attain his affirmation and union with the All only because he eschews the easy way of convenient words and phrases as explanations of reality. "Words are not good for the secret meaning. Everything is always slightly distorted when one utters it in words—a little falsified, a little silly." He goes on to confide that he does not make distinctions between thoughts and words. "To be perfectly frank, I don't have a very high opinion of thoughts. I like *things* better." And he concludes by asserting that any ostensible difference between his views and those of Buddha is only illusory, the product of word-confusions. In essence, despite all superficial differences, they agree. The final vision, in which Govinda sees totality and simultaneity revealed in his friend's face, is also an epiphany: a direct revelation to Govinda of the essential unity of being that Siddhartha was unable to convey through the medium of words.

It is through epiphanies that Siddhartha breaks out of the rigid schematism of Buddhism and Brahminism (their "highly bred reformation" quality of which Hesse speaks in the diary of 1920) and begins to enter into an immediate contact with the world, though it first leads him to the false extreme of sensualism. Since love is the new dimension of Siddhartha's world, he must, as his final trial, learn to affirm even the rejection of his love by his own son. Only after he has suffered the torment of rejection can he perceive the final truth, which had hitherto been purely intellectual: no two men have the same way to the final goal: not even the father can spare his son the agonies of self-discovery. When Siddhartha accepts this truth, he perceives with visionary clarity that in the realm of simultaneity and totality even he and his own father are one. Just as he had once deserted his father, so had his son left him.

Siddhartha gazed into the water, and in the flowing water pictures appeared to him: his father appeared, lonely, grieving about his son; he himself appeared, lonely, he too bound by the bonds of longing to his distant son; his son appeared, he too lonely, the boy, storming covetously along the burning course of his young desires; each directed toward his goal, each possessed by his goal, each suffering.□ The image of the father, his own image, that of the son flowed together; also Kamala's image appeared and merged with the stream, and the image of Govinda, and other images, and flowed one into the other, becoming one with the river.□

Not until he has recognized and then affirmed the loss of his son is Siddhartha ready to enter the state of fulfillment. Only at this point does he affirm with love the insight which had been purely intellectual cognition when he departed from Buddha. For even in the case of his own son he is forced to concede that each man must find his own way in life, that no man's path can be prescribed. Thus the highest lesson of the novel is a direct contradiction of Buddha's theory of the Eightfold Path, to which □ Hesse objected in his diary of 1920; it is the whole meaning of the book that Siddhartha can attain Buddha's

goal without following his path. If rejection of that doctrine is the essence of the novel, then it is futile to look to Buddhism for clues to the structural organization of the book. Rather, the structural principle is to be found precisely where the meaning of the book lies. Just as Siddhartha learns of the totality, and simultaneity of all being—man and nature alike—so too the development of the soul is expressed in geographical terms and, in turn, the landscape is reflected in the human face. The book achieves a unity of style, structure and meaning that Hesse never again attained with such perfection after *Siddhartha*.

It would be futile to deny, on the other hand, that this unity has been achieved at the expense of the narrative realism we customarily expect from fiction. Just as the characters and landscape have been stylized into abstractions by Hesse's poetic vision, likewise the dialogue and action have been reduced—or escalated—to symbolic essentials. As in *Demian* the action is almost wholly internalized: the excitement of this externally serene work is entirely within Siddhartha's mind. It is ultimately beside the point to judge this work by the criteria of the traditional realistic novel. Like Hermann Broch, who insisted that his *The Death of Vergil* was a "lyrical work" and that it be read and criticized as such, Hesse had good reasons for calling *Siddhartha* "an Indic poem." In both works there is a stratum of realistic narrative, but each as a whole represents the symbolic projection of an inner vision and not an attempt to capture external reality mimetically. Like his heroes, who vacillate between nature and spirit, Hesse as a narrator feels conflicting impulses toward realism and lyricism. In *Siddhartha* he reached an extreme of symbolic lyricism.

Source: Theodore Ziolkowski, "*Siddhartha:* The Landscape of the Soul—The Beatific Smile and The Epiphany," in his *The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme in Structure*, Princeton University Press, 1965, pp. 170-77.

Critical Essay #3

In this excerpt, Malthaner points out the autobiographical nature of Siddhartha *and argues that the novel reflects Hesse's emphasis on faith as the only way for man to "penetrate to the source of light" and "find God."*

[Hesse's] novels do not have a strong plot around which the action revolves and therefore lack suspense or excitement. They are largely autobiographical and deal with questions of "Weltanschauung", of a philosophy of life. The plot is used by Hesse to drape his thoughts around it, to have an opportunity to present his innermost thoughts and the struggle for an understanding of the great problems of life. Hesse is, and always has been, a god-seeker; he has a message for his fellow-men, but one must "study" him, read and re-read his works carefully if one wants to get the full benefit of their message. His works are not so much for entertainment but rather want to give food for thought; they have therefore a very strong appeal for the serious minded reader but not for the masses that crave excitement and entertainment instead of beauty and depth.

Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* is just such a work of literature, and it is of special interest to the student of literature, and of Hesse in particular, because it marks an important step in the development of Hesse and is unique in German literature in its presentation of Eastern philosophy.

The novel is largely auto-biographical and has a long and interesting history. It is no doubt true of all great works of art that they do not just happen, that they are not products of chance. Great works of literature have their roots way back in the life of their writers, they have grown out of life and are part of the life of their creators; great works of literature are not factory products but grow and ripen slowly to full bloom. This is especially true of *Siddhartha*.

Siddhartha was published in 1922 but has its roots in the earliest childhood of Hesse. His parents had been missionaries to India, his mother having been born in India of missionary parents; but on account of the poor health of Hesse's father the family had to return to Europe and came to Calw, a small Black Forest town, to help the maternal grandfather of Hesse, Dr. Gundert, the director of their mission and a famous Indian scholar and linguist. Indian songs and books, frequent discussions about India with visiting missionaries and scholars, a large library of Indian and Chinese writings, also many objects of Eastern art created great interest and left a deep impression on Hesse ever since his childhood.

The first part of *Siddhartha*, up to the meeting with the courtesan Kamala, was written before 1919 and was first published in the literary magazine *Neue Rundschau*. Siddhartha is the son of a rich Brahman of India. He is a good obedient son and the joy of his parents, but one day be awakens to the realization that his life is empty, that his soul has been left unsatisfied by his devotion to duty and the strict observance of all religious ordinances. He wants to find God who so far has been to him only a vague idea, distant and unreal, although he tried to serve him with sincerity of heart to the best

of his understanding. Young Siddhartha realizes that he is at a dead end and that he must break away. So he leaves home leaving behind him all that he so far had loved and treasured, all the comforts, giving up his high social position, and becomes a Samana, an itinerant monk, with no earthly possessions anymore, accompanied by his boyhood friend Govinda who has decided to follow Siddhartha's lead. By fasting and exposing his body to the rigors of the weather, Siddhartha wants to empty himself completely of all physical desires so that by any chance he may hear the voice of God speaking to his soul, that he may find peace.

Hesse's books are confessions, and the story of Siddhartha is his own story describing his own doubts and struggle. He, too, had rebelled: against the pietistic orthodoxy of his parents and the strict school system in Germany that destroyed any attempt of independence in its pupils. So he ran away to shape his own life. Self-education is the main theatre of most of the novels of Hesse, especially of the books of his youth. Self-education has been for centuries a very favorite theme in German literature and men like Luther, Goethe, Kant, and many other leading German writers and philosophers were the inspirers of German youth in their longing for independence.

It is significant that Hesse gave to a collection of four stories published in 1931, in which he included *Siddhartha*, the title of *Weg nach Innen*, Road to Within. Indeed, Siddhartha turns away from the outside observance of religious rituals and ordinances to a life of contemplation. So also does Hesse himself after the outbreak of World War I. Up to the war, Hesse had lived a rather quiet and self-satisfied life. After years of hard struggle to win recognition as a poet, he had found first success which brought him not only social recognition and financial security but also many friends and a home. But the war brought him a rather rude awakening out of his idylic life on the shore of Lake Constance where he had lived a rather happy and retired life. His apparently so secure and well ordered world came crashing down over his head. The vicious attacks by the German press and by many of his former friends for his stand against the war psychosis —Hesse was living at that time in Switzerland although he was still a German citizen— forced him to re-examine the fundamental truths on which he had built his life. He had become distrustful of religion as he saw it practised, and of education which had not prevented the western world of being plunged into a murderous war. Where was the truth? On what foundation could a man build his life? All had been found wanting.

Siddhartha is Hesse's attempt to restore his faith in mankind, to regain his lost peace of mind, and to find again a harmonious relationship with his world. A new more spiritual orientation takes place. He does no longer believe in the natural goodness of man, he is thrown back unto himself and comes to a new concept of God: No longer does he seek God in nature but, in the words of the Bible, he believed that "the Kingdom of God's is within you".

Hesse confesses that he had been pious only up to his thirteenth year but then had become a skeptic. Now he becomes a believer again, to be sure it is not a return to the orthodox belief of his parents, he wants to include in his new concept of religion not only the teachings of Jesus but also those of Buddha and of the Holy Scriptures of India as well.□

Returning to our story, we find that Siddhartha also as a Samana has not come nearer his goal of happiness and peace. It seems to him that his religious fervor had been nothing but self-deception, that all the time he had been in flight from himself. The hardships which he had endured as a Samana had not brought him nearer to God.

At this period of his life, Siddhartha hears of Gotama Buddha of whom it was said that he had attained that blissful state of godliness where the chain of reincarnations had been broken, that he had entered Nirvana. Siddhartha goes to find him, hears him teach the multitude, and then has a private conversation with the Holy One; but it becomes clear to him that the way of salvation can not be taught, that words and creeds are empty sounds, that each man must find the way by himself, the secret of the experience can not be passed on. So he leaves also Gotama Buddha and all teachers and teachings. Govinda, his friend, stays with Gotama and so Siddhartha cuts the last link with his past. He is now all alone. And he comes to the sudden realization that all through the years so far he has lived a separate life, that he actually never had sought a real understanding of his fellow men, that he knew very little of the world and of life all about him. For the first time in many years he really looks about him and perceives the beauty of the world. The world about him, from which he had fled, he now finds attractive and good. He must not seek to escape life but face it, live it.

This is the startling new discovery Siddhartha makes and so he decides to leave the wilderness. He comes to the big city where he sees at the gate the beautiful Kamala, the courtesan. He finds her favor and she teaches him the ways of the world. He discards his beggar's clothes and becomes in short time a very successful merchant. But his heart is neither in his love nor in his business; all the pleasures of the world can not still the hunger of his soul. He finds the world wanting, too, and, moreover, he must realize after a few years that the worldly things, the acquiring of money, have gradually taken possession of his life, that he is being enslaved and harassed by the necessity of making money in order to satisfy his extravagant tastes, that he has become a busy and unfree man whose thoughts dwell less and less on the eternal things.

So he cuts himself loose from all that he had acquired, leaves once again everything behind him, and goes back to the river which he had crossed when he gave up his life as a Samana.

At this point there is a long interruption in the writing of *Siddhartha*. Hesse realized that his knowledge of Eastern philosophy was not sufficient; he devoted himself therefore to a very thorough study of Indian philosophy and religion. After a year and a half he takes up the writing of the story again. It is quite evident, however, that the emphasis has shifted. Description from now on is practically absent, and the tone is lighter, the language, too, is not so heavy, not so mystic but transparent and more elevated. The whole concentration is on the spiritual element. Instead of long discussions of philosophies and systems, we find the emphasis now on Faith. He perceives that only through faith, not by doing or by teaching, can man penetrate to the source of light, can he find God.

At the bank of the river Siddhartha sits for a long time and lets his whole life pass in review before him. He finds that even the evil things which he had done lately had been necessary as an experience in order to bring him to an understanding of what life really was. But he also becomes discouraged because all his endeavors so far had not given him the desired insight and peace of soul. There was nothing left in life that might entice him, challenge him, comfort him; he finds himself subject to an unescapable chain of cause and effect, to repeated incarnations, each of which means a new beginning of suffering. Will he ever be able to break this chain? Will he ever be able to enter Nirvana? He doubts it and is at the point of drowning himself when the mysterious word "OM" comes to his mind. "OM" means "having completed", in German "Vollendung". He realizes the folly of his attempt to try to find peace and an end to his sufferings by extinguishing his physical being. Life is indestructible. Siddhartha realizes, too, that all life is one, that all creation is an indivisible one, that trees and birds are indeed his brothers; he sees his great mistake in trying always to do something instead of just to be.

He joins Vasudeva, the ferry man, who shows him the great secret of the river, namely that for the river the concept of time does not exist: The river just is, for the river there is no past, no future, no beginning, no end; for the river is only the presence. And for man, too, Vasudeva tells him, happiness is real only when causality—that is time— has ceased to exist for him. The problem is not, as Siddhartha had always understood it, to find perfection, but to find completion, "Vollendung".

One more lesson Siddhartha had to learn. When he left Kamala she had known that she would bear him a child, but she did not tell Siddhartha because she realized that she could not and must not hold him back, that Siddhartha had to go his own way. Later, too, she felt the emptiness of her life; so one day she decides to seek Gotama Buddha of whom she had heard. Her way leads her to the river where, unknown to her, Siddartha lived and stopping at the bank of the river to rest, she is bitten by a poisonous snake. Siddhartha finds her dying and recognizes her. After he had buried her, he takes his son, a boy of some twelve or fourteen years of age, to him. Siddartha feels keenly the loss of Kamala, but it is not sadness that is in his heart for he knows now that all life is indestructible, that Kamala has only entered a new life, life in a wider sense, that in every blossom, in every breeze about him there is Kamala. He is not separated from her, never will be, in fact she is nearer to him now than ever before.

Siddhartha devotes himself to the education of his son but must make the painful experience that his love is not appreciated and his endeavors are repulsed. His son does not want the life Siddhartha thinks best for him, he wants to live his own life, and thus breaks away from his father as Siddhartha in his own youth had broken away from his own father. With the loss of his son, there is nothing left that binds Siddhartha to this world. He realizes that this had to come, so that he would no longer fight what he considered fate but give himself unreservedly to his destiny; thus Siddhartha has overcome suffering at last and with it has attained the last step of his completion, he has entered into Nirvana; now peace has come to Siddhartha at last.

Source: Johannes Malthaner, "Hermann Hesse: *Siddhartha*," in *The German Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, March, 1952, pp. 103-09.

Adaptations

Siddhartha was adapted as a film by Conrad Rooks, starring India's leading actor, Shashi Kapoor, Lotus Films, Columbia-Warner, 1972; cassette, Newman Communications, 1986.

Topics for Further Study

Research the Indo-European family of languages, of which English, German, and Sanskrit are members. How does Pali, the language of Buddhism, fit in? What are other member languages? What migrations may have affected the history of this language group?

Investigate C.G. Jung's concepts of the shadow, the *anima*, and the *animus*. Consider how the various characters in *Siddhartha* illustrate these concepts.

Compare the Eastern ideas of simultaneity and totality as represented by the river with the philosophy of time and space that evolves out of Einstein's theory of relativity.

Consider the father/son theme in *Siddhartha* in relation to Hesse's idea of synthesis.

What Do I Read Next?

The oldest speculative literature of the Hindus is the *Upanishads*, composed between 600 B.C. to 300 B.C. It is a collection of works on the nature of man and the universe.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is part of the great Hindu epic the *Mahabharata* and has been called the New Testament of Hinduism. This discussion on the nature and meaning of life between the god Krishna, who appears as a charioteer, and Arjuna, a warrior about to go into battle, has had substantial impact on Western thought.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes*, a book of the Old Testament, portrays his search for the meaning of life, his sense that all is vanity, and his own conclusions in his old age.

Goethe's *Faust*, an 1808 play based on the legend of a German necromancer, Georg Faust, focuses on an old scholar who yearns to have not so much all knowledge but all experience. In order to do so, he must promise his immortal soul to the destructive tempting spirit, Mephistopheles.

A different look at India is provided in E.M. Forster's 1924 novel, *A Passage to India*. The novel is notable for its strong mystical flavor and its treatment of Indian religions, including Islam and Hinduism.

With the publication in 1904 of *Peter Camenzind* (translated 1961), Hesse established himself as an important German writer by winning the Bauernfeld Prize of Vienna. It is a poetic/realistic narrative of the gauche and inhibited misfit Camenzind and, in many ways, is Hesse's own veiled literary self-disclosure of his life in Basel.

Demian was written by Hesse in 1919 and translated into English in 1923. The novel is a *bildungsroman* featuring Emil Sinclair, a young man who is troubled by life's conflicting forces. A mysterious boy, Max Demian, tells him of the devil-god Abraxas, who is the embodiment of good and evil.

Hesse's 1927 novel *Steppenwolf* was translated into English two years later. It is a treatment of the artist as an outsider, a common theme in Hesse's fiction. Torn between his own frustrated artistic realism and the inhuman nature of modern reality, Harry Haller thinks of himself as a wolf of the Steppes.

Many of Hesse's works focus on the interaction between characters with opposing temperaments. In his 1930 novel, *Narcissus and Goldmund* (translated 1932), the title characters represent, respectively, spirit and life. Set in a medieval monastery, half of this novel follows the friendship of the introverted, ascetic Narcissus and the extroverted sculptor Goldmund; the other half chronicles the latter's hedonistic adventures outside the cloister.

Another Hesse *bildungsroman*, *Magister Ludi: (The Glass-Bead Game)* was written in 1943 and was translated in 1949. Josef Knecht lives in a utopian society of the twenty-

third century that is dominated by a glass-bead game practiced in its highest form by an intellectual elite. Knecht eventually dies after departing to the outer world, the tragic result of a life dedicated entirely to the world of the spirit.

Further Study

Mark Boulby, in *Hermann Hesse: His Mind and Art*, Cornell University Press, 1967.

A book-length study of Hesse's fiction with a chapter on *Siddhartha* that shows how Hesse's use of Indian themes promotes a Western, Christian world view.

Madison Brown, "Toward a Perspective for the Indian Element in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*," in *German Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2, March, 1976, pp. 191-202.

An analysis of how *Siddhartha* draws on themes from Indian religious and cultural traditions but revises them to promote Hesse's own world view.

Harish Chander, "Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* and the Doctrine of Anatman," in *South Asian Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8, July, 1979, pp. 60-66.

An analysis of how *Siddhartha* develops Buddhist religious themes regarding the universal soul.

Robert C. Conrad, "Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha, Eine indische Dichtung*, as a Western Archetype," *German Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4, Fall, 1975, pp. 358-69.

An analysis of how Hesse uses Indian themes to develop Western archetypal patterns.

George Wallis Field, in *Hermann Hesse*, Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970.

This book is a comprehensive and detailed study of Hesse's novels complemented by biographical and factual information.

Husain Kassim, "Toward a Mahayana Buddhist Interpretation of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*," in *Literature East and West*, Vol. 18, No. 2, March, 1974, pp. 233-43.

An analysis of how *Siddhartha* develops a Buddhist philosophy rather than a Christian one.

Celian LuZanne, *Heritage of Buddha: The Story of Siddhartha Gautama*, Philosophical Library, 1953.

This book provides historical information on the life of the Buddha, the model for Gotama Buddha in Hesse's novel.

Johannes Malthaner, "Hermann Hesse: 'Siddhartha'," in *German Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, March, 1952, pp. 103-09.

This article describes Siddhartha's spiritual journey and suggests that his quests reflect Hesse's attempt to regain his harmonious relationship with the world.

Joseph Mileck, "Hermann Hesse," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Vol. 66; German Fiction Writers*, *1885-1913*, edited by James Hardin, Gale Research Company, 1988, pp 180-224.

This essay provides a comprehensive overview of Hesse's life and work by one of the great Hesse academic scholars.

Bhabagrahi Misra, "An Analysis of Indic Tradition in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*," in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 11, 1968, pp. 111-123.

An analysis of how *Siddhartha* draws on both Hindu religious beliefs and Western existentialism.

Ernst Rose, *Faith from the Abyss: Hermann Hesse's Way from Romanticism to Modernity*, New York University Press, 1965.

This volume provides poignant and significant biographical information and correlates Hesse's major works to corresponding periods in his life and state of mind.

Leroy Shaw, "Time and Structure of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*," in *Hermann Hesse: A Collection of Criticism*, edited by Judith Liebmann, McGraw-Hill, 1977, pp. 66-84.

An analysis of how the narrative structure of *Siddhartha* is patterned after Buddhist religious principles and an Eastern sense of timelessness.

Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, Harper & Row, 1958.

This classic study provides a comprehensive study of eight great world religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism.

Kamal D. Verma, "The Nature and Perception of Reality in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*," in *South Asian Review*, Vol. 11, No. 8, July, 1988, pp. 1-10.

An analysis of philosophical and metaphysical themes in *Siddhartha*.

Bernhard Zeller, *Portrait of Hesse*, Herder and Herder, 1971.

This biography is augmented by numerous photographs.

Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure*, Princeton University Press, 1965.

This book explores the central themes that are woven through much of Hesse's work as well as the structure of individual novels, including *Siddhartha*.

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Project Editor
David Galens

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

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

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

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:

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