The Snows of Kilimanjaro Study Guide

The Snows of Kilimanjaro by Ernest Hemingway

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Introduction

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Ernest Hemingway presents the story of a writer at the end of his life. While on a safari in Africa, Harry, the protagonist, is scratched on the leg by a thorn, and the infection becomes gangrenous and eventually kills him. Where most of Hemingway's stories feature protagonists who speak little and reflect nothing at all about their motivations and inner lives, in this story, the main character "sees his life flash before his eyes" as he realizes that he is dying. Many readers have seen Harry as a self-portrait of Hemingway himself. Reading the story this way, the reader can look into Hemingway's struggles with himself: his insecurities, his machismo, his need and disdain for women. But it is not necessary to read the story through the lens of Hemingway's biography. The story is a gripping look at a man who is facing death and regretting many of the choices he has made in his life, as well as being a memorable glimpse inside the head of a writer who is reflecting on his craft and the demands it has made on him.

Author Biography

Ernest Hemingway, as a result of his short stories, novels, and nonfiction, has become perhaps the best-known American writer of the twentieth century. In such novels as *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway chronicled the lives of aimless, adventuring young adults in Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century. In other writings, Hemingway wrote elegantly and perceptively about some of his passions: bullfighting, hunting, fishing, drinking. But it is in his short stories where Hemingway best shows his mastery of style and structure and where his deepest and most enduring themes—death, writing, machismo, bravery, and the alienation of men in the modern world7mdash; dominate.

Hemingway was born, in 1899, into perhaps the most characteristically American of environments: the suburbs. His mother was domineering, and dressed young Ernest in girls' clothes when he was young (a fact that many of Hemingway's biographers and critics have noted as an explanation for his relentless machismo). He graduated from Oak Park (Illinois) High School in 1917 and immediately went to work for a Kansas City newspaper. In 1918, he enlisted in the Red Cross and drove ambulances on the Italian front in World War I until he was seriously wounded—an episode that forms the basis for his famous novel *A Farewell To Arms* (1929).

The period between the World Wars brought Hemingway fame, fortune, and great artistic success. In 1920, Hemingway moved to Paris, where he lived for much of the following decade. Hemingway became a defining figure of the famous "Lost Generation" of Americans in Paris in the 1920s, and wrote *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) as a portrait of the lives of his rootless, thrill-seeking friends who wandered from Paris to the south of France to Spain and back. During the 1930s, Hemingway wandered the world himself, spending time hunting and fishing in such locales as Kenya, Key West, Montana, and Spain. In the late 1930s Hemingway covered the Spanish Civil War as a journalist; from this experience arose his 1940 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In 1939, now an international celebrity, he moved to Cuba, but with the outbreak of war in 1939, his taste for adventuring returned and he came to Europe in 1942 to fly with the RAF and participate in the Normandy invasion in 1944.

The years after World War II, when Hemingway entered middle age, grew increasingly difficult for him. He continued to write, but only one of his books, *The Old Man and the Sea*, received much critical acclaim. He survived two airplane crashes, from which he never entirely healed, and his death was reported in the press at one point in 1954. That same year, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize for Literature, but he was declining and depressed. In 1961, he committed suicide in his cabin in Ketchum, Idaho, leaving behind four ex-wives, a number of children, and many thousands of pages of unpublished manuscripts.

Plot Summary

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" opens on the African savanna where a man and a woman are talking to each other matter-of-factly about the man's leg, which is rotting away from gangrene. The woman is trying to make him more comfortable and make him believe that he will survive, but he seems to be enjoying the black humor of the vultures who are waiting for him to die. As she speaks to him, his resentment of her money and her upbringing comes out in his comments.

The first of his flashbacks comes at this point. In this flashback, he remembers being in World War I, then thinks about scenes in numerous winters. Details from the war and from various pleasant skiing excursions mingle in his mind. As that flashback finishes, Harry returns to the present and argues with the woman before falling asleep. When he wakes up, the woman has been out to shoot an animal for them to eat and he thinks about her, why he married her, and why he does not like her. We learn that she is a lusty woman who was married before, who had two children and lost one of those children in a plane crash. Before he slips into another flashback, he and the woman have a drink together just as the realization that he is going to die hits him.

In his second flashback, he thinks about his time in Paris and Constantinople, but all of his memories are colored by memories of the war. When he returns to consciousness, she convinces him to drink some broth and he stops thinking so harshly of her before slipping into a third flashback. In this memory, he is in the forest, living in a cabin, and then remembers being in Paris and spending time near the Place Contrescarpe. He briefly returns to the present to ask for another whiskey and soda before flashing back again, this time to the fact that he never took the time to write about many things that he wanted to write about. His flashbacks start to bleed into the real world as he asks the woman to explain why he never wrote the stories he wanted to write. He thinks about why he feels such contempt for the wealthy, a group to which this woman belongs.

In his final flashback, he thinks again about the war, this time about a man he saw die, before waking from his flashback and talking to the woman more. He begins to see Death personified, breathing sourly on him. It is then morning again, and the pilot, Compton, has arrived to take him to the city and to the doctor. Harry gets in the plane and the pilot, instead of taking him to the city, flies him right by the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro and Harry "knew that there was where he was going." In the final section of text, the woman wakes up because the hyena that has been making noise for hours stopped whimpering and has begun making another sound. As she looks over at Harry, she realizes that he has died.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

Author's Preface: Hemingway explains that Kilimanjaro is snow-covered, the highest mountain in Africa. He tells the story of the unexplained frozen carcass of a leopard that wandered near the western summit.

This Hemingway short story opens with dialogue between a man and another person; we learn in a few paragraphs that the other person is a woman, and that the man believes he will die soon. They sit under a mimosa tree as they watch vultures fly in circles overhead. He wonders aloud whether they have come because they see he is helpless or if they can smell his leg, which is rotting with gangrene.

He observes that he has been watching the large, ugly birds since the day they were stranded, and today is the first day the birds have landed on the ground. He thinks it is ironic that he had been observing them in case he wanted to write about them later. Here we learn the man is a writer.

His companion, the woman, is quite nervous. She feels helpless stranded with him injured out there in the wilderness, and his desire to talk makes her uncomfortable. He insists he is dying, and she refuses to believe him. They bicker, and he grows quiet, noticing the scenery and the native animals, including zebras.

Again, she asks him if he would like her to read to him. Again, he refuses. They begin to argue again, and we learn the man's name is Harry. She is preoccupied with being rescued, and he is preoccupied with getting a whiskey-soda. Molo, the servant, obliges him.

Harry begins a long series of reflections about life and death. Since his leg became gangrenous, he has felt no physical pain, and the fear he once had about death is gone. He reflects about the things that he had always wanted to write about but never written, not knowing enough about them.

The woman begins to complain about coming to Africa in the first place. She says he would have never gotten gangrene in Paris, or Hungary, or anywhere else. She says she hates Africa, and asks what they did to have that happen to them. He explains it by saying he did not take proper care of the wound, or the fact that they did not have a good mechanic, or the fact that she left her "Saratoga, Palm Beach people" to be with him.

Harry retreats into his own memories in the next passages, which are italicized. In his mind, he visits faraway places, long-ago times. The details of these encounters do not really matter as much as the general impressions: he remembers many winters spent in the Alps; he remembers helping people in need, remembers the horror of war and the

cheer of Christmas. He recalls good friends, sweet smells and accordion music, and he has never written any of it down.

Coming to for a minute, he asks the woman where they stayed in Paris, and then he compares love to a pile of dung, and himself to a proud cock standing on it to crow. She asks if he has to "burn your saddle and your armour," why he has to destroy all her memories. Yes, he says, your money was my armor.

Harry continues to verbally spar with her, prodding her weak spots, trying deliberately to hurt her, saying " [t]he only thing I ever really liked to do with you I can't do now." She begins to cry, and Harry apologizes, saying that he does not know why he is acting this way, and lies to her, saying he's never loved anyone else the way he loves her. In the next sentence, he calls her a bitch. When she asks why he has to be this way, he says he does not want to leave anything behind.

That evening, after Harry wakens from a nap, the woman has gone out to hunt for some food. He ruminates that it is a shame that she became involved with him when he was "already over." He has spent years telling lies to different people with money, living off the luxury they could provide. Harry had told himself that he would leave them and write about them later, but he has gotten more and more comfortable until finally, he has stopped writing altogether. To him, the trip to Africa has been a way to get back in shape again.

Harry berates himself for turning his venom on her, and he berates himself for allowing himself for losing his talent. He has ruined his ability through alcoholism, through lack of practice, through social bias and through sheer laziness. He realizes his talent has been wasted, and he has made his living by loving increasingly wealthy women. This one out hunting truly does love him, yet all he can give her are lies.

Harry spends the next several paragraphs describing the character of the woman: she is attractive, with a nice body, and she is also an alcoholic. She has tried to fill her life with lovers, with books, with alcohol, but to no avail. The woman has come to be with Harry through a combination of several different circumstances, one of which being a need to escape her old life after one of her grown children dies in a plane crash. Harry thinks that now the life they have made together is ending because he forgot to use iodine two weeks ago when a thorn scratched his knee.

The woman returns to camp, reporting that she has shot a Tommy ram and will make stew for dinner. He tells her he is feeling better and they are pleasant to each other. She talks about plans to send out another smoke signal tomorrow. They relax and drink whiskey-sodas together, and the first feeling of the emptiness of death rushes over him.

Harry collapses into another long, silent reverie about his first mistress who had left him, about the loneliness he had felt and how the drink and the lovemaking with prostitutes could not quench his desire to be with her. He recalls the letter he had written her, asking her to write him at the office, and he remembers how his wife (whom he also loved) found out about the whole thing. Harry has always wanted to write about these

women, but he did not because he did not want to hurt their feelings. It was his responsibility to write about those times, he thought, but now he could not.

The woman returns, offering broth; he refuses, saying he wants to write, and she says he needs to eat. He insists he is going to die, but takes the broth anyway. He feels death coming again, in a "puff," and decides he will not quarrel with her any more. Asking if she can take dictation, he falls into another memory that has never been written down.

This time, he returns to his grandfather's log house in the forest, where he had picked blackberries, and thinks about his grandfather's guns, which were melted down. He remembers the trout stream in the Black Forest and the innkeeper in Triberg. Harry thinks that he could dictate some things, but he could not dictate the sound and the smell of the Place Contrescarpe, the drunkards, the *sportifs*, the dirty streets or any of the other places and people he had loved in Paris.

She returns, offering more broth, and he refuses, asking for another whiskey-soda. He decides to sleep some more, looking for death, but it is still not there, and he realizes that not only has he never written about Paris, but also he has never written about so much else in his life. He recalls life on the ranch and recalls a story about a mentally retarded chore boy who murdered a man, and how Harry had had to turn him in to the authorities. Harry thinks that he knew at least twenty worthwhile stories from that place, and why had he never written one?

In his delirium, he asks the woman to tell them why, and she does not know what he is talking about. He decides that if he is to live, he will not write about the woman or any of the other rich people, for they are boring. He muses about death, thinking that it cannot hurt him if he chooses not to care about it. He is glad that the pain he was feeling is bearable for the time being.

Harry remembers a scene from the war in which an officer had been hit by a bomb. The officer was in horrible pain, his entrails spilling out of his body, and he begged Harry to shoot him; instead, Harry gave him all his morphine tablets.

Harry decides that dying is a boring process, has a few pleasant words with the woman and then he feels death come by again. He tells her the only thing he has lost is his curiosity; she disagrees. Suddenly, he notices that death is at the foot of his cot and he can smell its breath. Then it sits upon his chest, rendering him unable to do anything. He hears the woman say that he has fallen asleep. When his cot is lifted, the weight of death is gone.

It is morning; he hears the rescue plane coming, and greets his friend Compton, who tells him he is flying a small plane and there is only going to be room for one. Harry describes the scene as he watches the beasts of the plain get smaller while the plane soars into the heavens. The plane takes a different path until finally coming to the brilliant white top of Kilimanjaro. Harry knows this is where he is going.

The woman hears the hyena's cry in the night and wakes up, startled. She shines her flashlight over to Harry, calls to him and realizes that he is dead.

Analysis

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro," written in 1938, has several themes that one could see as emerging from Ernest Hemingway's own life and experiences.

The first and most obvious comparison is that the protagonist of the story is also a writer. Throughout the story, Harry is plagued with the regret of having left so many stories untold. This must have been a personal fear of Hemingway's—that he would be unable to write down all of the interesting things that had happened to him in his colorful life. Hemingway may also have been afraid of "selling out," of letting his associations with the well off in society dull his writing. In addition, like Harry, Hemingway had experience with the terror of battle that colored all of his subsequent writings.

Relationships between men and women are often flawed in Hemingway's works; this story is no exception. Harry is portrayed as little better than a gigolo, a man who has chosen to live among the rich by feeding off the love of wealthy women and lying to them. His lover in the story is never named; in fact, none of his former love interests are named, either. This symbolizes Harry's lack of true love for any of them. He has been driven by his passions and by his selfishness. Yet, interestingly enough, he thinks that he has never written about these women because he has not wanted to hurt anyone's feelings.

Harry and the woman have had a relationship full of luxury, adventurous travel and sexual pleasure, but it is clear that not even the finer things in life have prevented them from having communication problems. It becomes clear that although they claim to love each other, the woman cares more for Harry than he cares for her. Indeed, at one point in the story, it is difficult to believe that Harry even likes her. However, by the end of the story, the reader is left with the feeling that if these two had met before Harry had turned completely cynical, and if he had not suffered this tragic accident, things may have turned out differently.

We find out at about the midway point in the story that the gangrene in Harry's leg was caused by a scratch from a thorn on a photo expedition. This can be seen as somewhat ironic: they are on safari in Africa and he does not get attacked by wild beasts, but he will die because of a thorn. In another light, the thorn is symbolic of lies and deception in a relationship: things like that can start out small, but before anyone knows what has happened, the entire thing is rotten, and cannot be saved.

Hemingway uses some interesting language to speak of death in this story. From the beginning, the protagonist is sure of his imminent death, signaled by the circling carrion birds. He does not panic, but uses the time in quiet reflection and meditation on his life and the regrets that he has. However, once he feels that the end is coming closer, Harry thinks of death as being some sort of animated creature, able to move like an animal.

Death is stalking him as the hunter stalks its prey. He smells its foul breath and tries to give it orders; at the end, his actual fears become apparent when he tries to tell the woman to help him. "Tell it to go away," he breathes. These are his last words.

Snow is another interesting symbol in this work. It is unclear at first why Hemingway would take care to mention the frozen carcass of a leopard who had wandered onto the mountain, but it plays an important part in Harry's collection of memories. Harry spends several paragraphs of words he has not yet written on the snowy Alps at Christmas. Then, of course, at the end of the story, as Harry is dying (he dies just as the cot is being lifted off the ground, and he feels the weight lifting) the last thing he sees are the blinding white snows of Kilimanjaro. In the author's preface, he mentions that the Masai call the western summit the "House of God." In this way, the snowy mountains that have always symbolized home and happiness for Harry become his imagined final resting place.

Characters

Compton

Compton flies the plane that is meant to take Harry back to the city to save his life. He is confident and tries to make Harry feel better about his predicament. However, he exists only in Harry's dream.

Harry

Harry is the protagonist of the story. He is a writer and has had many experiences in Europe. He also very much enjoys big-game hunting. When the story begins, Harry is suffering from gangrene in his leg and he is dying in the African backcountry while waiting for a plane to take him to the city.

Helen

Harry's wife Helen, also known as The Wife, remains unnamed until the end of the story, when a delirious Harry finally refers to her by name as he dies. After Harry reaches the summit of Kilimanjaro, the previous narrative voice resumes and again calls her simply "the woman." Harry does not seem to love her, but he respects her to a certain degree for her skill with a gun. She comes from a wealthy family and Harry has contempt for that. She, on the other hand, cares for him greatly and tries to ease his suffering.

Molo

Molo is the African servant who serves Helen and Harry. He does very little in the story apart from bringing Harry whiskey and sodas.

The Wife

See Helen

Themes

Death

As the story of an imminent death, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is suffused not only with images of death but also with a pervading sense of death's presence. The story begins with death—"it's painless," Harry says in the first line, referring to his oncoming demise—and ends with the ironic comparison of the woman's heart beating loudly and the stillness of Harry's lifeless body. Death is symbolically figured both as the pristine whiteness of the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and as the creeping, filthy hyena that lurks outside of Harry's tent.

Harry's attitude toward his death wavers during the story. At first, he puts up a brave and almost cavalier front, telling his wife that he does not care about his death and is resigned to it. He almost seems to be trying to anger her, knowing that she cares about him and that he can hurt her by seeming not to be bothered by death's imminence. But in the italicized sections of the story, Harry's bravado disappears, and he slips into the regret of a man who knows he is dying but who rues the fact that he has not accomplished what he wanted to accomplish. The gangrenous rot that is taking his leg metamorphoses, in his mind, into the poetry that he never wrote: "I'm full of poetry now. Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry."

Hemingway brings death into the story largely by the use of symbolism. The woman leaves the camp to go kill an animal, going out of his sight because (the narrator states) she does not want to disturb the wildlife. However, she clearly does not want to kill something in plain sight of her dying husband. The hyena, an animal that feeds on carcasses, skulks around the camp, a prefiguration of the rotting death that Harry fears. Even the relationship between Harry and his wife is a symbol of his imminent end: he says that the quarrelling had "killed what they had together."

But when death comes it is not rotten and lingering and painful. Rather, it is transcendent. Harry slips into a reverie in which he hallucinates that his friend Compton arrives in an airplane to take him to find medical care. As the plane takes off, it passes by the blinding white summit of Kilimanjaro. As Harry passes this image, the reader is reminded of the epigraph of the story, in which Hemingway says that "close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeing at that altitude." Harry seems to have found something, though: a release from his earthly problems.

Artistic Creation

Harry's failure to achieve the artistic success he sought in his life is one of the main themes of the story, and in this the character of Harry comes very close to being a representation of Hemingway himself. In the italicized flashbacks, we see Harry as he

was in his earlier life, especially in Paris, where he lived in bohemian poverty and devoted his energies to writing. But he consistently regrets leaving that behind. He gave up, in a sense, and began spending his time drinking, travelling, hunting, and chasing rich women. He became "what he despised," as the narrator says.

His perceived failures eat away at him like the gangrene that eats his leg. At one point he explicitly equates them: "Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry." He uses his verbal talents to quarrel with his wife and instead of seeking to heighten his sensations he dulls them with alcohol. In this sense, the hyena that lurks around his tent is not only creeping death but also his pangs of regret at his wasting of his artistic gifts. Ironically, it is in death that he returns to creating. As he slips away, he hallucinates a beautiful scene: his friend Compton comes to him to take him to a hospital, and as they fly away Harry catches a glimpse of the summit of Kilimanjaro, a vision that awes him by its purity. Only here, as he dies, does he take part in the kind of creation and transcendence that he has always sought.

Style

Point of View and Narration

The type of narration Ernest Hemingway typically uses, the author himself said in an interview with George Plimpton, was fashioned on the "principle of the iceberg . . . for seven eighths of it is under water for every part that shows." In *A Moveable Feast* (1964), his memoir of Paris in the 1920s, he expands on this. "You could omit anything," he writes, "if the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood." Hemingway's characters usually bury not only their feelings about their pasts but their pasts, as well, and his narrators—usually thirdperson narrators who see inside the heads of the main character—join along in this act of burial. In most of his best short stories, the protagonists are carrying some deep psychological hurt that they will not even think about to themselves. Their minds are "icebergs" because the reader can see just the hint of these troubles peek forth at times, and must read extremely carefully to try to piece together exactly what is bothering the protagonist.

In this sense, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is a very atypical Hemingway story. In this story, the matters that trouble Harry are made clear to the reader; the narrator, who is inside Harry's head, speaks of them explicitly. But Hemingway sets these instances of introspection apart, dividing them into sections printed in italics. In all but one of the sections that are in roman type, the narration is typical Hemingway: blunt, unadorned, almost devoid of adjectives, and quite uninformative as to what Harry is feeling. The sentences are short and declarative. But when the narration drifts into the italic sections, the tone changes. The sentences grow longer and almost stream-of-consciousness, with one clause tacked on after another recording the protagonist's impression of a scene. The narrator describes scenes fondly and vividly, and uses metaphors and figurative language: "the snow as smooth to see as cake frosting," for instance.

As the story proceeds and Harry's condition worsens, the switching between unadorned narration and impressionistic, memory-laden narration becomes quicker and more frequent, until the penultimate section. In this section—the section in which Compton arrives and takes Harry away—the reader thinks they are in the "real world" until the end, when they realize that Harry is having another dream sequence. This time, though, the dream— usually delineated by italics—has bled through to the "real world," and the only clue, before the end of the dream, that it is a dream is the sentence structure. In this section, the sentences are longer, more impressionistic, more descriptive, just as the sentences in the earlier italic dream segments were. The contrast between the "real world," in which Harry's gangrene has killed him, and the dream world, in which he is flying toward the "unbelievably white" peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, is accentuated in the final section, in which the narrator returns to his short, declarative sentences.

Flashback

The flashback is a technique that Hemingway uses extensively in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." The story is divided between present-time sections (set in roman type) and flashbacks (set in italics). In the present-time sections, the protagonist is facing his death stoically, quietly, and with a great deal of machismo. All he needs is whiskey and soda to accept his imminent death. But in the flashback sections, Harry faces his life. His flashbacks show the reader that he has had an exciting and welltravelled life, but that he is also haunted by his memories of World War I. He served in the U.S. Army in that war and saw combat on the Eastern front, in the Balkans, and Austria. The violence and death that he saw there come back to him as his rotting leg tells him that he is about to die.

Harry's past is not all negative, though. He is a writer, and in his flashbacks he thinks about his vocation and about all of the stories he wanted to write that he never took the time to begin. He has spent time in Paris with the artists and writers who lived there in the 1920s (one name he mentions, Tristan Tzara, is a real poet of the time, and another, "Julian," is a thinly-disguised portrait of the American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald) and is familiar with the Place de la Contrescarpe, a popular bohemian locale of the time. His flashbacks also show that he is an experienced outdoorsman□necessary background to this character, so that readers do not think of him as a greenhorn who is dying out of pure inexperience.

Allusion

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" alludes subtly to two well-known short stories: one by its structure and technique, the other by its subject matter. The first story is "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1891), by the American writer Ambrose Bierce. In this story, set during the Civil War, an Alabama man is being hanged on Owl Creek Bridge for espionage. As the story opens, readers see him on the bridge, having the noose put over his head. When the boards under his feet are snatched away, the rope breaks. He is able to use his bound hands to take the rope off his neck and swim away down the river as the Union soldiers' bullets hit the water by him. After swimming down the river a long way, he gets out and finds his way back home. As he arrives at his house and as his wife stretches her arms to greet him, the noose jerks at his neck and he dies instantly. The whole story has been an imaginary scene that the protagonist has lived through from the time he begins falling to the time that the rope's slack runs out. Just like in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," the seeming salvation for the hero existed only in the hero's mind.

Hemingway's story also alludes to another wellknown story, Henry James' "The Middle Years" (1893). Like Hemingway, James presents a selfportrait of a writer near the end of his life. James' Dencombe, like Hemingway's Harry, has an admirer (but in this case the admirer is male, not a wife), and this admirer gives up something important and

valuable to be with the writer. Finally, like Harry, Dencombe dies, somewhat unexpectedly and ironically, at the end of the story.

Historical Context

World War I

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" takes place in the decades between World Wars I and II. The first World War was a traumatic experience for Europe and America, for although it was fought largely in Europe it involved almost every European nation and, at the time, the European nations controlled vast areas of Africa and Asia. The war was remarkable for the sheer mass of killing it entailed. New technologies of war, including motorized vehicles, airplanes, and poison gas, were used for the first time. Probably most traumatic and senseless was the strategy of trench warfare, utilized largely in France and Belgium, in which each army dug a trench in the ground and attempted to advance to overtake the opposing army's trench by waves of soldiers going "over the top." Hundreds of thousands of soldiers died in these waves, but trench warfare only brought the war to a bloody standstill.

Hemingway saw action in the war—not in the trenches, though, for he drove an ambulance in Italy—and was wounded. Many of his characters, including Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," carry around painful memories of the war. Some of his characters, such as Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*, also carry around their physical wounds and disabilities. The war and its unprecedented gore psychologically maimed countless veterans, and often Hemingway's characters submerge their pain underneath the immediate world. This submersion provided Hemingway with a real-world correlation for his "iceberg" technique of structure and narration, and often in his stories what is submerged is the protagonist's memories of the war.

Africa in the 1930s

For the first half of this century, Africa consisted almost exclusively of colonies of European nations. From the 1500s to the 1800s, the main European powers—England, France, Holland, Belgium, Portugal, and Germany—divided up between themselves control over the African continent for economic reasons. The European countries wished to take advantage of the natural—and, in the case of the slave trade, the human—resources of Africa to enrich themselves. Belgium controlled the country known until recently as Zaire; Germany and Portugal ruled the present nation of Angola; the French had dominion over much of the west coast of Africa, a region that included the current nations of Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Algeria; the Dutch and the English fought over control of South Africa and its vast diamond mines; the English also had power over the large and very wealthy territories of Nigeria and Kenya.

Mount Kilimanjaro, the landmark that dominates Hemingway's story, is in Kenya, and this territory was a popular destination for European and American adventure tourists such as Harry who wished to hunt exotic game animals on safaris. Beginning with World War II and lasting until the late 1970s, most of the African nations achieved

independence: at times independence was granted by the European colonial powers, such as in the case of Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe); at times the African nation fought a war to achieve independence, as in the case of Algeria. By the 1980s, no African nation was a colony of a European power, although each nation maintained a relationship of varying closeness with its one-time colonial ruler.

Paris in the 1920s

Ernest Hemingway was a member of a group of artistic-minded young Americans who, after World War I, moved to Paris to live and write and paint and sculpt and, in writer Kay Boyle's words, "be geniuses together." Some members of this group were the writers Kay Boyle, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Robert McAlmon, and Hilda Doolittle. The writer Gertrude Stein, another American who had been living in Paris for some time, dubbed these Americans the "lost generation" partially because of the aimlessness, dissatisfaction with their home country, and refusal to assimilate into the culture of France.

Hemingway came to Paris in 1921 with his first wife, Hadley Richardson, after having been in Europe during the last year of World War I. During the time he and Hadley lived in Paris, he worked as a foreign correspondent for the Toronto *Star*. Also at this time, he lived experiences that have become inextricably linked with Hemingway, such as the running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. In 1923 he published his first book, *Three Stories and Ten Poems*; in 1924, his first short-story collection, *In Our Time*, appeared, published by Three Mountains Press. Small presses like Three Mountains were an essential element of Lost Generation life; many members of this crowd either ran such presses or had their work published by them. During the 1920s, Hemingway and the rest of the Lost Generation wrote, wandered around Europe, drank, and just spent time together, as a result producing some of the greatest art and writing of the century.

Critical Overview

Historically, critics have been divided on the merits of Hemingway's work. While contemporary critics praised Hemingway's mastery of form and narration, later critics took Hemingway to task for the limitations of his themes, for his perceived sexism, and for his extremely negative views of human life. Recent critical opinion has come to see Hemingway primarily as a stylist who has nothing profound or deeply original to say about the human condition, and although his influence on today's short story writers is difficult to overstate, many critics today believe that Hemingway is simply not a great writer.

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" was first published in Esquire magazine in 1936, and first appeared in book form in his collection *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* of 1938. At that time, critics had their first opportunity to express their opinions on the story, and most were enthusiastic. Alfred Kazin, in the Books supplement to the *New York Herald Tribune*, wrote that the story was simply "terrific," and Edmund Wilson felt that the ending was "a wonderful piece of writing." Malcolm Cowley, in the *New Republic*, noted that the story was "the only story in which [Hemingway] has allowed himself to be conventionally poetic."

Later critics used the story to discuss larger themes that recur throughout Hemingway's writing. Mark Schorer wrote in 1941 that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" marked a turning-point in Hemingway's career, when his "subject matter began to change—from violent experience itself to the expressed evaluation of violence." Schorer felt that with this shift, Hemingway's powers had reached their limitations. Granville Hicks, writing in the *New Republic* in 1944, also noted a decrease of the quality of Hemingway's writing, but puts the date earlier. Such stories as "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," though, "permit Hemingway . . . to pull himself together after he had given every evidence of having gone to pieces, and to declare his old powers." In 1964, the literary biographer Richard Ellman remarked that one of Hemingway's posthumous publications— the Paris-in-the-1920s memoir *A Moveable Feast*—gave the writer a chance to return to "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." "The hero of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" regretted on his deathbed that he would never be able to describe how he lived near the Place Contrescarpe, or how he wintered in Schruns, but Hemingway carries out posthumously Harry's unfulfilled intentions." Another critic, Julian MacLaren-Ross, notes the same congruity: in *A Moveable Feast*, "here we have again the tworoomed apartment in the rue du Cardinal Lemoine where Harry, the drunken failure dying of gangrene in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," having traded in his talent for security and comfort, also lived."

Critics closer to the present day have examined the story closely, especially to learn more about Hemingway's attitudes toward death and writing. Joseph M. Flora extensively analyzes the story in his book *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction*, and writes that it "shows us Hemingway writing a very different kind of story than any he had previously attempted. . . . The Snows emphasizes thought, perhaps because the protagonist can no longer avoid thinking. Ironically, the end of this African hunt has been reflection and judgment— something the African story had been

designed to keep at a distance." Flora draws a parallel between this story and two etchings by the eighteenth-century English poet William Blake, noting that both artists looked at imminent death in similar ways, and allegorize it. Noting that the leopard mentioned in the story's epigraph represents Harry himself, Flora argues that the epigraph is "a compact allegory of the story." Flora also notes the irony of Hemingway describing the death of a "bad man" in a way that makes him good and that grants him transcendence. Gennaro Santangelo disagrees, feeling that this "moral redemption" symbolized by the mountain is "spurious." The story is "a nightmare version of what [Hemingway] might have been and still might be."

In their study of Hemingway's work, Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner grant "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" a prominent place, calling it "Hemingway's one careful presentation of a non-ideal portrait of an artist" and using it to test their perceptions of Hemingway himself. Harry is "egocentric, hypocritical, and morally as well as physically rotten," but the story "elevates him to the snow-capped summit and forces the reader to accept him as a superior man." Hemingway turns the world upside-down, they argue, and readers accept it. Contrary to readers' perceptions, they come to accept Harry as a "superior man" and to feel the same contempt for his wife that he does. The wife and the hyena both, the critics argue, represent the dull, misunderstanding public against which the writer must struggle. The readers themselves are the hyenas. "It is fair to say," Rovit and Brenner conclude, "that Hemingway succeeds in this story in insulting his audience beyond endurance, in making the audience eat its own wounds, and like it."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Barnhisel holds a Ph.D. in English and American literature and currently teaches writing at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. He has written a number of entries and critical essays for Gale Group's Short Stories for Students series. In the following essay, Barnhisel examines Hemingway's styles of narration and how they explain Harry.

Although it is perhaps the least characteristic of any of Ernest Hemingway's short stories, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is often considered to be Hemingway's finest accomplishment in the genre of short fiction. Moreover, most critics agree that Harry, the protagonist of the story, is Hemingway's self-portrait, and this makes the story doubly interesting for students of this giant of twentieth-century American writing. The story recounts the death of a failed writer and a man who is at least unpleasant, if not actually the "bad man" that many of his critics have accused him of being. In describing Harry's death, Hemingway confronted many of the demons that haunted him: contempt for what he saw as an ignorant audience, alcohol and its numbing effects, war, and the unfulfilled promise of a vastly talented writer. Hemingway and Harry both arrive at a vision of transcendence that is ironically incongruous with Harry's decidedly degraded character.

But does this vision actually represent transcendence, or does the ending juxtaposition of the story—Harry flying toward the snow-capped peak of Mount Kilimanjaro while his wife remains in the humid tent with his rotting leg and a hyena whining outside—simply represent Harry's final fictionalizing of himself? The story relies heavily on symbolism, and critics generally have used the symbols in the story as the primary evidence for their interpretation of the moral value of Harry's end. To fully understand the story, however, readers must also take into consideration the styles of narration that Hemingway uses, for the distinction between the roman type sections and the italic sections reflects the distinction between Harry's exterior persona and his interior memories.

The story moves by means of oscillation. It is structured as a pendulum that swings between two extremes, and this motion works on many levels. On a typographical level, the story moves between roman and italic type. At the same time, the text oscillates between dialogue-driven, almost adjective- free plain prose and a reminiscence-laden, runon style of thinking about the past. Harry's attitude toward his wife oscillates between contempt or even loathing for her to affection and respect for her. Most of the symbols in the story are polarities, as well; the hyena at the end of the story and the leopard at the beginning are different extremes of the same pendulum, as are the clean white peak of the mountain and the fetid humidity of the plain.

The sections in roman type are very typical of Hemingway's writing. In these sections, the protagonist converses with his wife about the events of the immediate present and skims over the details of the past. In this, the story resembles such classic Hemingway stories as "Cat in the Rain" or "Hills Like White Elephants." But in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"—and quite unlike many Hemingway stories—the internal thoughts of the protagonist are revealed as early as the third page: "So now it was all over, he

thought . . . for years it had obsessed him; but now it meant nothing in itself." But for the most part, Harry is a classic macho Hemingway character, staring death in the face and not seeming to blink. "Can't you let a man die as comfortably as he can without calling him names?" he asks his wife. "I'm dying now. Ask those bastards," he continues, indicating the vultures who are waiting to claim his body.

The sections in roman type, such as the section discussed above, show Harry to be an egotistical, cruel, callous, and mean-spirited man. Even before readers journey into his thoughts to learn his opinion of his wife, they can already see that he holds her in contempt by the way he brushes off her efforts to be kind and caring to him. "So this was the way it ended in bickering and a drink," he thinks to himself. As the story progresses, he takes his frustrations out almost exclusively on his wife. When she tries to remind him of things he loved—hotels in Paris, for instance—he snaps back at her that "love is a dunghill . . . and I'm the cock that gets on it to crow."

Harry had been a promising young writer who fell in with a rich crowd because, he told himself, he wanted to write about them. "He had had his life and it was over and then he went living it again with different people and more money," the narrator states. However, he was seduced by their luxuries and allowed those luxuries to distract him from his true calling. "Each day of not writing," the narrator continues, "of comfort, of being that which he despised, dulled his ability and softened his will to work so that, finally, he did no work at all." To purge himself of this luxury and to remind himself of the hardships that drove him to his best work, he and his wife took this safari "with the minimum of comfort" so that "in some way he could work the fat off his soul the way a fighter went into the mountains to work and train in order to burn it out of his body."

But the presence of his wife reminds him of all of the damage he has done to his "soul," and because of that he is neither able to return to his "fighting trim" or to arrive at genuine love for her. The portrait of his wife that readers have is created by the narrator, but Harry's prejudices color it, and the description of his wife becomes the battlefield on which he fights his inner conflict about who is responsible for the atrophy of his talents. "She shot very well this good, this rich bitch, this kindly caretaker and destroyer of his talent. Nonsense. He had destroyed his talent himself," he thinks to himself. The wife, on both a symbolic and literal level, represents the destruction of creativity. She has had love—the ultimate symbol of creativity— and children, but her husband died when she was young, and, later, one of her children followed her husband in death. She replaces love and fecundity with sex (through a succession of lovers) and alcohol, both of which Harry also indulges in but disdains. She has also learned to shoot and kill— two of Harry's other passions.

As the story continues the oscillation between Harry's present situation and his reminiscences accelerates, and each section becomes shorter. Harry's attitude toward his wife, as well, veers more quickly between contempt and grudging affection. Finally, the "reminiscence" section blurs into the "real-world" section as Harry imagines that Compton has come to take him to the city to be healed. Only at the end of the section, when he flies into the snow-white peak of Kilimanjaro, do readers realize that this, also, takes place in his own mind and not in the real world.

Although the story is much more explicit and revealing than almost any other piece of writing by Hemingway, it still leaves readers with a number of questions. The primary question is whether Harry's journey into the peak of the mountain represents transcendence. Many critics have argued that it does; Harry's wife represents the unfeeling, ignorant audience that the true artist must face, and although Harry is an unpleasant man he has been driven to be so by his failures as an artist—failures that are the fault of the misunderstanding audience. On a symbolic level, then, Harry's festering leg represents his talent, that is rotting due to a lack of understanding, and the leopard of the story's epigraph represents Harry himself: he scaled the heights only to die there. The vultures are the literary critics who await his death to metaphorically feast on him by attacking his writing; the hyena symbolizes the critics who attacked him during his life only to mourn his death. And Kilimanjaro itself represents the heights of art: the savanna is humid, rotting, hot, and teeming with life, while the mountain peak is clean, arid, pure.

Hemingway, though, does not make things so simple. Rather, he undermines this simple dichotomy between clean-high-cold and rotting-low-warm just as he undermines the dichotomy between reminiscences and "real-world" narration. The fi- nal vision of the mountain is not one of transcendence and salvation for the artist. No: the final vision of the mountain is the last manifestation of Harry's profound ability for self-deception.

The story centers on Harry's failures as an artist, and readers ask themselves why a writer as promising as Harry seems to have been ended up failing and never writing what he wanted to. The answer lies partially—not solely, but perhaps largely— in his experiences in the war. Harry's final reminiscence before the italics sections and the roman-type sections blend into one another is of the war. Specifically, he remembers a companion of his, "a fat man, very brave, and a good officer," who was wounded and caught in the barbed wire with "his bowels spilled out." Harry thinks about how he and this officer had discussed how such pain would, or should, cause a man to pass out, but how the officer did not pass out.

Harry is now in the same situation, and that is the immediate cause of the memory. But it is the larger cause of the memory, as well. The rest of Harry's memories had been of his pleasant experiences and his failure to write about them—experiences skiing in Austria, for instance, or fishing in Germany. But when the memories boil down readers arrive at one thing: the war. Harry's experiences in the war left him unable to write truly, fully, and honestly about experience because he simply could not face the horrors that he saw there. It is for this, readers then recognize, that he seeks out the wealthy, for they are best able to turn the dramas of life and death into sports and into representations of the real. The safari itself is an attempt to come to grips with the problem of death, and for this reason Harry is attracted to it, but since he has seen honest human death as closely as a person can see it he is both repelled by and inexorably attracted to it. This conflict—he must write about death, but he cannot write about it too accurately for fear that he might disturb his worst sleeping memories—drives his inability to write fulfilling work.

For this, his final vision of the peak of the mountain is ironic. Harry is powerless, drawn to life in the form of hunting, sex, and adventure, but he is also repelled by the sheer teeming, rotting, consuming nature of life. The peak of the mountain, constituted only of snow and rock, is transcendence to him. He cannot connect with life, for life, and its essential fertility, is something he needs to escape. The hyenas, the vultures, his leg, and his wife meld together as symbols of life; but they are symbols of life as something that feeds off other life—just like war itself. As he comes to the realization that life must feed off other life, he rejects life itself, and welcomes the apparition of the clean, white, sterile peak of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Source: Greg Barnhisel, in an essay for *Short Stories for Students*, Gale Group, 2001.

Adaptations

Many of Hemingway's novels and stories were adapted into films. Movies of his stories include two versions of *The Killers* (one starring Burt Lancaster and another starring Ronald Reagan) and *The Macomber Affair*, starring Gregory Peck ; movies of his novels include *A Farewell To Arms*, starring Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes, *To Have and Have Not*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, and the *Old Man and the Sea*, starring Spencer Tracy. In 1952, the studio Twentieth Century Fox produced a film of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" that starred Gregory Peck, Susan Hayward, and Ava Gardner.

Topics for Further Study

Where is Mount Kilimanjaro? What country is it in and what peoples live there? What kind of wildlife has its habitat near there? Do research on this part of the world, focusing on the twentieth century and the interactions between native peoples, colonizers, and the wildlife.

There are many wildlife parks in Africa where tourists may see such wild animals as zebras, rhinoceroses, and wildebeests. However, poachers— people who illegally hunt these animals as trophies or to sell their body parts—are a serious problem. Do research into the endangered species of animals in such nations as Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania, and investigate the problems caused by poachers.

Explore the figures involved in the "Lost Generation" of American writers and artists who lived in Paris in the 1920s, including Gertrude Stein, Josephine Baker, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Man Ray, and Kay Boyle. What brought these people to Paris? What did they accomplish there?

In the story, Harry and Helen are on a safari in Africa. What is a safari? What kinds of wildlife do people see on safaris? Can one still go on safari today?

Compare and Contrast

1936: Kenya, where Mount Kilimanjaro is located, is a British colony.

1999: Kenya is one of the most prosperous and stable of the African nations. It combines the colonial heritage of the British with the native traditions of East Africa. The country's leader, Daniel Arap Moi, is criticized for his efforts to thwart democracy.

1936: Animals such as the zebra, rhinoceros, and elephant are plentiful in Africa. Although a number of American and European adventurers come to Kenya to hunt these animals on safaris, their numbers are not great enough to endanger them.

1999: Many of the most unique large mammals of Africa are endangered by poaching (illegal hunting), encroachment on their habitat, and years of legal hunting. The world community has taken steps to try and help these animals survive, but a persistent world market for commodities made from these animals ensures that impoverished Africans will continue to hunt them.

1936: The United States is suffering from the most deep and prolonged depression in its history. President Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected to his second term with promises to continue his "New Deal" programs.

1999: The United States is enjoying the most prolonged period of prosperity in its history. President Bill Clinton takes much of the credit for these good times, and seeks to have his vicepresident, Al Gore, elected president in 2000.

1936: In Germany, Adolf Hitler is absolute ruler. German Jews are oppressed by the government; many flee the country. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain will meet with Hitler in 1938 and agree to Hitler's annexation of Austria and takeover of Czechoslovakia, with the condition that Hitler stop his expansionism there. In September, 1939, Hitler will invade Poland and start World War II

1999: Germany celebrates ten years of unification after having been separated, by the aftermath of World War II, for forty-four years. Berlin undergoes massive reconstruction and seeks to be the most modern city in Europe.

What Do I Read Next?

The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition (1987) collects all of Hemingway's short stories. As a body, they are truly remarkable, but the early stories—"Big Two-Hearted River," "Ten Indians," "Cat in the Rain," "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and many others—are haunting for the way that they embody Hemingway's "iceberg" principle of writing, in which a writer should leave out seveneighths of the information in the story.

Hemingway's most famous novel is *The Sun Also Rises* (1927). Its description of aimless Americans wandering around France and Spain is exhilarating, distasteful, and angering all at once.

If *The Sun Also Rises* is the best-known fictionalization of the "Lost Generation," Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964) is the most famous nonfiction description of life in Paris in the 1920s, the milieu of such famous artists and writers as Man Ray, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and Picasso. Another excellent portrait of the same time and same people is Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle's *Being Geniuses Together 1920-1930*, an interesting experiment in which Boyle and McAlmon alternate chapters describing their life as members of the Lost Generation. Finally, this hard-drinking crowd spent a good deal of time in bars, and Jimmie Charters was one of their favorite bartenders. His book *This Must Be The Place* (1927), features an introduction by Hemingway and tells chatty stories of the same people.

In "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (1891), the American writer Ambrose Bierce provided Hemingway with the structural model for *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*: a man, about to die, who miraculously escapes death and takes the reader on a flight of fancy, only to realize that he has indeed died. Another precursor story to Hemingway's is Henry James' "The Middle Years" (1893), in which a writer, near death, thinks about all he could have and should have written.

In *Out of Africa* (1938), Isak Dineson, a Danish woman, wrote of her experiences not only with African wildlife but also with African people—a group that Hemingway leaves out of his story.

Many critics and readers have compared the work of the American short story writer Raymond Carver to Hemingway's best work. Like Hemingway, Carver writes of characters who repress their emotions; also like Hemingway, much of the motivation for the characters is hidden. However, unlike Hemingway, Carver writes of lower-class people, primarily in the Pacific Northwest, who work, marry, and struggle through the small and great difficulties of life. Carver's best-known collection is called *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981).

Further Study

Bensen, Jackson J., ed., *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays*, Duke University Press, 1975.

This book is a good place to start a study of Hemingway's short fiction. There is an enormous mass of critical information on his stories, and this anthology gives readers an idea of the dominant strains of Hemingway criticism.

Kert, Bernice, *The Hemingway Women*, W. W. Norton, 1983.

Hemingway continues to be criticized for what many readers see as his insulting and overly simplistic treatment of women; this book is a solid introduction to the controversy surrounding "Hemingway's women" and discusses the wife in "Snows of Kilimanjaro" in particular.

Stephens, Robert O., ed., *Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception*, B. Franklin, 1977.

This book collects critical opinion on Hemingway from the time that his books appeared. Reading a book's initial reviews, and comparing those opinions on a work to critical opinion half a century later, is often enlightening not only as to how opinion on a writer changes but also as to how the institution of literary criticism itself changes with society.

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Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
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

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

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Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

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 Short Stories for Students (SSfS) 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, SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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

SSfS 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS 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 Short Stories for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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, Short Stories for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535