A Soldier's Play Study Guide

A Soldier's Play by Charles H. Fuller

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Contents

Introduction

A Soldier's Play opened November 20,1981, at the Negro Ensemble Company for the first of 468 performances. Fuller has stated that his play is modeled after Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, which explores a confrontation between evil and innocence that results in tragedy. While it is about the investigation of a murder, *A Soldier's Play* is not a murder mystery in the strictest sense. The investigation does not consist of policemen unraveling clues or of the simple analysis of physical evidence. Instead, the investigation by a black officer is primarily an exploration into who the slain Waters really was and how racism influences men's behaviors and ideals. The investigator, Captain Davenport, tries to solve this mystery by interviewing the men who served under Waters.

These interviews provide pieces of a puzzle, that when assembled, create a picture of a complex man who often bullied his men but who saw the war as an opportunity for blacks to escape the constraints of segregation. The portrait of Waters reveals a man who has found the only power white men will give to a black man as a non-commissioned officer in the army during World War II. Critics were enthusiastic about Fuller's play, which won a Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Award in 1982, but *A Soldier's Play* also provoked controversy. Where some critics argued that Fuller was forcing audience members to confront their own prejudge, a leading black dramatist, Amiri Baraka, accused Fuller of working against his own race and of fulfilling the dreams of white power. Fuller's play was never produced on Broadway; rumor has it that Fuller refused to remove the last line of the play, "you'll get used to it [Negroes being in charge]."

Author Biography

Charles H. Fuller was born in Philadelphia on March 5, 1939. His father was a printer, and it was while proofreading his father's work that Fuller became interested in literature. While in high school, Fuller and a friend vowed to read every book in the library, but when he realized that there were no books by African Americans, Fuller pledged to fill the shelves. After attending Yiddish theatre, Fuller became focused on drama. Fuller joined the army in 1959 after two years at Villanova University. While in the Army, he served as a petroleum laboratory technician in Korea and Japan. After his time in the army, Fuller attended LaSalle College from 1965 to 1968 and continued to write. Fuller ignores these early efforts, although critics praised his *The Village: A Party* (1968) as showing promise. Fuller's first professionally produced play, *The Brownsville Raid* (1976), drew critical attention. This was followed by *Zooman and the Sign* (1980), which won two Obie Awards. Fuller's next play, *A Soldier's Play* (1981), earned him a Pulitzer Prize for drama, making Fuller only the second black playwright to win this honor. *A Soldier's Play* also garnered the New York Drama Critics Award for best American play and the Outer Circle critics award for best Off-Broadway play in 1982. Fuller's film adaptation of this play earned him an Academy Award nomination for best screenplay adaptation in 1984. Fuller went on to begin work on a collection of plays that dramatizes the black experience during the Civil War. The first of the series of five to six plays was completed in 1988, with the production of *We* for the Negro Ensemble Company. Fuller is also co-founder and co-director of the Afro-American Arts Theatre in Philadelphia (1967-71). In addition, he has been a writer and director of "The Black Experience" for WIP-Radio in Philadelphia (1970-71). Fuller has also contributed short stories to anthologies and periodicals and is currently at work on another play.

Plot Summary

Act I

The play opens with the murder of Sergeant Waters. The audience sees Waters on stage; he is drunk. Immediately there are two shots, but the audience never sees who fires the weapon. In the next scene, five black soldiers are being searched for weapons and they are confined to their barracks, presumably until the risk of a revenge killing ends. Captain Davenport appears on stage and addresses the audience in a monologue that explains why a black lawyer has been sent to a southern army base to investigate a murder. There is immediate conflict when the company captain, Taylor, learns that Davenport is black. Taylor warns Davenport that he will get no cooperation and that no one in authority will allow a black officer to arrest a white man, if the murderer turns out to be white. Taylor also tells Davenport that white officers at the post will not accept a black man of equal rank, and that in his experience, blacks are subordinates without education. Davenport insists on performing his assignment and sets up to interview the men in Waters's company.

The first man interviewed is Wilkie, who tells Davenport that Waters put him in jail and reduced his rank after Wilkie was caught drunk on duty. Wilkie also tells Davenport about the black baseball team and how the black soldiers beat the white soldiers at baseball. From Wilkie, the audience learns that Waters, who thought southern blacks lazy and shiftless, was especially kind to C.J. C.J. was not only good with a baseball bat, but he sang and played the guitar. But the reality is that Waters only pretended to like C.J. In truth, Waters had no use for games or for southern blacks, whom he thought were playing into white stereotypes of black men. Wilkie tries to humanize Waters when he relates the sergeant's hopes for his two children.

The next soldier to be interviewed is Peterson, who tells Davenport that he and Waters came to blows and that Waters beat him after Peterson challenged Waters's authority. In the midst of talking with Peterson, Taylor sends for Davenport. When Davenport reports to Taylor's office, he is told that Taylor has filed papers to stop the investigation. Taylor also reveals that the night Waters was murdered, he has a confrontation with two white officers. One of the officers beat Waters severely before being pulled off by the second man. When Davenport accuses Taylor of covering up a black man's murder by white officers, Taylor replies that both men had faultless alibis. The act ends with Davenport pledging to prove the white officers guilty.

Act II

Act II opens with another monologue by Captain Davenport, who tells the audience that he has gone to Colonel Nivens and received permission to question the two white officers involved. When he finishes this speech, Davenport begins questioning the next man, Henson. Henson relates how C.J. was framed by someone who placed a gun

under his bed. When Waters told C.J. that he was under arrest, the young soldier attacked Waters, who then arrested C.J. and charged him with attacking a superior officer during time of war. The men discuss the arrest and decide to go to the captain and tell him that they saw someone sneak into the barracks and plant a gun under C.J.'s bed. When Davenport interviews Cobb, he is told that Cobb visited C.J. in jail and that the young man was severely depressed by the confinement. The day after the visit, C.J. commited suicide. The next interview is with Byrd and Wilcox. Taylor is also present. The atmosphere is filled with tension, but eventually Davenport learns that both Wilcox and Bryd have been cleared when their weapons passed ballistics tests.

At this point, Davenport goes back to interview Wilkie a second time and learns that it was Wilkie who planted the evidence that resulted in C.J.'s arrest. Wilkie also reveals that Waters hated southern blacks and thought they made all blacks look foolish. At that moment, Ellis enters to announce that the company has orders and will be leaving for Europe within 48 hours. Davenport arrests Wilkie and in the next moment learns that Smalls is in the stockade accused of going AWOL. When Davenport confronts Smalls, he confesses that he watched Peterson murder Waters. In a short monologue that follows this revelation, Davenport tells the audience that Peterson was arrested a week later. He also provides a brief follow-up to the men's lives and the audience learns that the entire company was killed during a German advance.

Act 1

Act 1 Summary

A Soldier's Play is a two-act play about the investigation of a murder at Fort Neal army barracks near Tynin, Louisiana, in 1944. The protagonist of the story is Captain Davidson, a black officer, in charge of the proceedings to determine who has killed a Negro officer, Sergeant Waters. The play not only looks at the facts of the case but also addresses the topic of racism in the American South in the mid 1940's.

Lighting is an important element in this play as it is used to highlight locations as well as set the mood for scenes occurring from memory.

As the play opens, Sergeant Waters, a small Negro man, is crawling on hands and knees, obviously drunk and trying to stand. As he yells out "they'll still hate you," a man appears in the shadows, pulls a gun and shoots Waters. A voice urges the perpetrator to leave but the man with the gun shoots Waters one more time. The man with the gun is never seen or identified in any way.

The light moves away from Waters and highlights the activity inside the barracks where five Negro soldiers are being frisked for weapons. The soldiers take offense to this action and are outraged that they are confined to the army base, eliminating any social activity in the local town. There is a fear that revenge killings may take place in light of Sergeant Waters' murder and the Negroes are being held on base for their own protection as well as for the sake of others.

Captain Taylor is the officer supervising the activity in the barracks and the Negro soldiers question the officer about any information that may have come available about the Sergeant's death last night. All the Sergeant is able to tell the men is that Sergeant Waters' body was found in the woods with two bullet wounds but there was no evidence that the Sergeant had been lynched.

Although there are no immediate suspects in the case, the Negro soldiers suspect that the murder is the act of the Ku Klux Klan. The organization is firmly opposed to Negro soldiers and do not like the fact that these men live on this base in Louisiana.

After Captain Taylor leaves, the men speculate that the Klan is responsible and are nervous for their own security as well. Trying to break the tension, a soldier named Cobb bemoans an itch in his groin and the others tease Cobb about being with too many wild women. Private Small is unnerved that the other men cannot see the gravity of the situation; last night Sergeant Waters was alive and tonight he isn't. Most of the others are resigned to lynching of black people as a fact of life in the South.

The lights go off of the men in the barracks and shine fully on Captain Davidson, a Negro officer who delivers a monologue about how he got involved in the Waters murder case. Davidson is dressed in an MP uniform complete with General MacArthur-

style sunglasses and carries a briefcase. Davidson is a lawyer but is also an MP assigned to policing Negro troops in the army.

It has been several weeks now since Sergeant Waters was murdered and the fury has died down, even among the Negro press that have kept the story alive as long as they could. The NAACP has enlisted Davidson to investigate at the request of Thurgood Marshall, the first Negro to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Unfortunately, the officers at Fort Neal did not want any local repercussions and kept the investigation at a minimum. That is when the case was assigned to Davidson.

The light expands to include Captain Taylor, to whom Davidson is introducing himself for the first time. Taylor is surprised to see a Negro officer and interrogates Davidson in an abrupt and offensive manner in an attempt to break down Davidson's calm demeanor. Taylor admits that his preparations for the investigation do not include a Negro investigator.

In addition, Taylor tells Davidson that no local people on a jury will ever convict a white man based on the information gleaned from a Negro man's investigation. Further, Taylor confides to Davidson that Taylor's own superior, Colonel Nivens, has no interest in determining the responsible parties. Taylor's attempts to divert Davidson are futile and Davidson is fixed on the purpose of his assignment.

Finally, Taylor admits that he has never seen a Negro officer before and the fact makes him uncomfortable. Once more, Taylor tries to dissuade Davidson but to no avail. In fact, Davidson tells Taylor that Taylor himself is ordered to cooperate fully with the investigation, no questions asked. With that, Taylor summons Corporal Ellis to escort Davidson to the barracks to begin the questioning of Sergeant Waters' men.

Davidson takes the opportunity to ask Ellis about any informal theories about the Sergeant's death. Ellis replies with the standard claim about the Klan being responsible but there are also rumors about two white officers being involved. Nothing ever came of the latter rumor, though and the investigation had stalled.

At the barracks, the soldiers are waiting to be interviewed. The first man to be questioned is Private Wilkie, who tells Davidson that he had known Sergeant Waters when Wilkie was a Staff Sergeant. Wilkie explains to Davidson that the Negro soldiers were always assigned to menial jobs but had a winning baseball team. Wilkie had relished the fact that the Negroes were superior in at least one thing because of his personal belief that most Southern Negroes were lazy.

Wilkie also admits that Waters had Wilkie stripped of his stripes because Wilkie had been found drunk on guard duty one night. Wilkie does not seem to hold any grudge about being knocked back down to the rank of private. Sergeant Waters had only done his duty in the situation.

Wilkie continues that it seemed as if Waters did like Private C.J. Memphis, a slow-witted Mississippi boy who plays the guitar and sings the blues. Waters was fond of that style of music and encouraged C.J. to play but as it turns out, Wilkie could not tolerate C.J.

because of the negative Negro stereotypes C.J. seemed to embody. If Waters liked anyone at all, it would have been his own two children whom Waters planned to send to good white colleges so that they would know how to speak and operate in the white man's world.

The next soldier to be interviewed is Private First Class Melvin Peterson, who comments that he did not like Sergeant Waters. Peterson had challenged Waters on an afternoon a year ago when the Negro baseball team had just won another game. Captain Taylor gave the team the rest of the day off but Waters intervened with orders to paint the officers' club lobby. Peterson resisted and he and Waters came to blows. Peterson admits that Waters, although a much smaller man, was able to beat him severely.

Peterson and Davidson are interrupted by an order for Davidson to report to Captain Taylor immediately. Taylor informs Davidson that he has filed papers to end the Waters murder investigation. Taylor wants to make it clear that Davidson's ethnicity is not the reason for the termination. Taylor wants the responsible parties brought to justice but knows that white people in the South will not convict a white man brought up on charges lodged by a Negro officer. Taylor sees no point in continuing an investigation that has no hope of a positive conclusion.

Davidson's threats to reveal Taylor's actions to the Negro press are wasted on Taylor, who is already locked in his captain rank forever by his reputation for addressing uncomfortable issues in his career. At this admission, Davidson begins to understand and he asks Taylor if there were white men involved in the murder.

Taylor was ordered to not reveal the participation of the two white officers in the official report. Taylor shares the names of Byrd and Wilcox as the white officers who had been seen threatening Waters the night of the murder. When Taylor had questioned Byrd and Wilcox, they told him that they had seen Waters outside the officers' club and he was drunk, rambling about the inequities of Negro life in the military.

According to Byrd and Wilcox, Waters would not be silenced after he had reached a point of being verbally abusive and Byrd thought Waters needed to be taught a lesson. Wilcox wanted to leave Waters alone but Byrd wanted to kick his head in. Taylor could get no more information from either man and their barracks mates confirmed that both Byrd and Wilcox were in bed by 2130.

Taylor could not shake the truth loose and Davidson feels that Byrd and Wilcox are probably guilty and fellow officers are covering for them. Taylor challenges Davidson to prove what he thinks and Davidson intends to do just that.

Act 1 Analysis

There are several high profile themes in this play, including racism and the hatred and violence that stem from it. The Negro soldiers are not welcome at this southern army base which borders on a predominantly white small town in Louisiana. It is natural for

the first suspicions to attribute the murder to the Ku Klux Klan due to the group's prevalence in the South and its history of lynching other Negro soldiers in the past.

Inside the camp, the Negro soldiers face a prejudice that keeps them assigned to menial tasks and dirty work with no hope of going overseas to do the real fighting in the war. Even in the midst of a world war, the Negroes are perceived not to be fit for combat, which adds another layer of subjugation on them. In a way, Sergeant Waters had tried to elevate his men above these restrictions by making army life even harder on them than it has to be.

The Sergeant's philosophy was to toughen up the Negroes because he knew they will have to work harder than any white man does to achieve anything. On the surface, it appears that Waters hated C.J., but in reality what Waters hated were the stereotypes that C.J. perpetuated and that continue to project negative stereotypes for other Negro people.

Violence enters the situation with Whites against Negroes overall and with Negro against Negro in the smaller microcosm of the barracks. The racial violence permeating the South is widely known but Waters also resorted to violence as a form of controlling the men he commanded. There was so much anger and hatred flowing in all directions that Waters felt that a violent, abrupt end to each scenario was the answer to the overall situation.

Essentially Waters hated himself for being a Negro man so he was doubly crippled by hatred and anger. He anesthetized himself with fights and alcohol, a cycle that led to his violent death. All Waters knew how to do was attempt to further the plight of Negro people. Unfortunately he was emotionally wounded and in no position to effect long-term change. Clearly, the realization of this fact contributed to the cycle of his own anger and resulting violence.

Act 2

Act 2 Summary

Captain Davidson is alone on the stage at the beginning of Act 2 as he relates the progress of the investigation to this point. As the Captain dresses, he relates that there had been much excitement among Negro soldiers in May of 1944, just a short while ago, because there was news that the Allies were making preparations to invade Europe. The possibility of being part of that major initiative was thrilling to Negro soldiers, who saw little action except for some isolated incidents in North Africa or Sicily.

Davidson's mood changes then as his anger takes hold thinking about how Eisenhower wanted to see if Negro boys could fight. To Davidson, Negroes have been fighting their whole lives, especially in small Southern towns like this one in Louisiana. Even as an MP, Davidson doesn't have the authority to arrest a white private without a white officer present. The inequity of the whole situation makes this Waters murder investigation all the more satisfying for Davidson.

Davidson reveals that he had visited Colonel Nivens to obtain permission to interview Byrd and Wilcox, the two white men in question in the investigation. Davidson feels that there is more to the story about the relationship between Sergeant Waters and C.J. and intends to follow his instincts to the end of the story.

The stage light expands to include Private Henson, who reveals that Sergeant Waters had constantly harassed C.J. about being inadequate in all ways, even on the baseball field. Then things took a turn for the worse after a shooting in town a little while ago at Williams's Golden Palace. Henson had heard gunshots that night and looked up to see a dark figure run into the barracks and place something under C.J.'s bed.

As Henson recalls, the shooting stopped and Sergeant Waters and Private Wilkie stormed into the barracks waking up all the men. Waters explained that two colored soldiers and one white soldier had been shot at the bar and some white soldiers had been shooting at everybody for revenge. Waters claimed that the perpetrator ran into the barracks and he was determined to find out which one of the men did this crime.

None of the men would admit to the shooting, so Waters orders Wilkie to search the bunks and footlockers. While Waters continues his questioning, Wilkie searches and finds a warm gun under C.J.'s bed and Waters places C.J. under arrest. The unsuspecting C.J. swears that he has been framed but Waters has the man taken away to the stockade.

Suddenly C.J. realizes his fate and tries to attack Waters, but he is subdued by the other men. Waters confirms that C.J. is to be arrested for attacking a superior officer. When Waters leaves, the rest of the men discuss the inequity of C.J.'s arrest and Peterson dresses to go to the MPs to tell that C.J. had been provoked.

Davidson orders Corporal Ellis to find Peterson and Small as Davidson proceeds to question Private Cobb, who shares with Davidson that he had visited C.J. in his jail cell two days after the arrest. Cobb tells Davidson that C.J. did not kill anyone and that Sergeant Waters had provoked C.J. into hitting him. C.J.'s mental state went downhill rapidly after he was incarcerated and further deteriorated after Waters visited him in jail to tell him that the gun belonged to another soldier.

Waters admitted to having provoked C.J. so that he could get him arrested for attacking an officer. Waters wanted C.J. in jail for any reason so that the world would be free of one more simpleton colored boy. Cobb continues from memory and tells Davidson that C.J. hanged himself the next day.

After that, Waters kept his distance from all the other men and stayed drunk all the time. Davidson questions Cobb about who the last ones were into the barracks on the night of the murder and Cobb reveals that they were Peterson and Smalls, who had been on guard duty.

Colonel Taylor arrives, which ends Cobb's interview. Taylor tells Davidson that he knows that Nivens has given Davidson permission to interview Byrd and Wilcox and that the two white officers have requested another white officer be present and Colonel Taylor is that man. Davidson confides in Taylor about his allegation that Waters tricked C.J. into assaulting him. Taylor cannot believe that Waters was capable of that type of behavior.

During the interview with Byrd and Wilcox, the two white officers deny killing Sergeant Waters, although they did have an encounter with the drunken Waters at the side of a road that night. Apparently, the altercation escalated when Byrd ordered Waters out of the way and Waters refused to comply for the sake of not being ordered around by another white man.

Byrd admits to knocking Waters to the ground, but neither he nor Wilcox shot the man and even turned their weapons in to Colonel Nivens immediately after the incident. Ballistics reports cleared their weapons and the men were released. Colonel Nivens kept the information a secret so that any word of the incident that might reach Washington would not be a racially motivated crime but rather one that was committed within the Negro population.

Taylor wants Byrd and Wilcox arrested, but Davidson does not comply and the men in question are released. There simply are not enough facts to implicate Byrd and Wilcox in Davidson's estimation. Corporal Ellis interrupts with news that Private Wilkie has been located at Captain Davidson's request and there is still a search on for Peterson and Smalls.

Davidson finds Wilkie waiting for him in the barracks and immediately asks Wilkie when he lost his Sergeant's stripes. Wilkie is nervous because Davidson has recalled him for more questioning. Davidson confirms once more that Wilkie lost his stripes for being drunk on guard duty, to which Wilkie agrees. Davidson wonders why Wilkie was not

angry with Waters, especially in light of the fact that the two men had been friends prior to Wilkie's demotion.

Wilkie finally breaks down and admits that he hated Waters for demoting him and that Waters promised Wilkie the return of his Sergeant stripes in exchange for planting the gun that would frame C.J. In public Waters humored C.J., but privately Waters seethed because C.J. personified every negative stereotype given to Negroes and Waters wanted this behavior stopped.

Wilkie tells Davidson a story that Waters had told him about an incident involving a colored soldier in France in World War I. The white soldiers had told all the French girls that the colored soldiers had tails like monkeys. To play a little game, the white soldiers paid a simple-minded colored boy to dance around with a tail tied to his naked rear end. The soldiers proceeded to position the colored soldier on a big table in the middle of a café, put a reed in his hand and a crown on his head and called him Moonshine, King of the Monkeys. Later on, when Waters and some of his pals slit the colored soldier's throat, the soldier wanted to know what he had done wrong. From that point on, Waters vowed to eliminate all matter of demeaning simpleton behavior from people of his own race. Framing C.J. was just another step in that plan.

Davidson wonders why Waters didn't pick on Peterson, but Wilkie tells Davidson that Waters secretly admired Peterson because he was quick and he would fight for himself and those were two very admirable and necessary qualities for a colored man.

Wilkie at last confesses that he agreed to help Waters frame C.J. in exchange for getting his stripes back and Davidson places Wilkie under arrest. Suddenly Corporal Ellis bursts into the room amid the sounds of gunfire and bugle blasts to announce that their unit is shipping out soon for the war in Europe. All the men are elated at the prospect at finally doing some good in the fighting.

Davidson orders Corporal Ellis to escort Wilkie to the stockade and inquires about the location of Peterson and Smalls. Smalls is in the stockade having been picked up by the MPs a short while ago.

Davidson approaches Smalls in his cell and wants to know why Smalls had gone A-W-O-L. Smalls tries to make excuses but finally admits to leaving with Peterson and Smalls breaks down and sobs. With further questioning, Smalls admits that Peterson killed Waters and he had merely watched. Peterson and Smalls encountered the drunken Waters on the road after guard duty that night.

Peterson could not resist the opportunity to torment Waters in his inebriated condition and pushed Waters into the dirt when he needed assistance. Waters told Peterson that C.J. would have never survived in the white man's world. Waters wanted to give the survival secret to Peterson. According to Waters, the answer to success is in being just like the white man.

Peterson does not want advice from Waters and shoots him in the name of C.J. and for everybody Waters had ever abused. Peterson shoots Waters once more and Smalls

admits to freezing from fright. Peterson made Smalls help him drag Waters' body into the woods so it would look as if the crime had been committed by white people. Smalls kept his silence on the matter from that day forward.

The light fades on Smalls and comes up on Davidson as he delivers his last monologue and the status of the investigation. Peterson has been arrested in Alabama and Colonel Nivens has written the event off to another "black mess of cuttin', slashin' and shootin.'" The senior officers are thankful that no white officers had been implicated and the report to Washington reflects the incident as typical to most when commanding Negro soldiers.

In the end, two Negro soldiers are dead and two more going to prison and to Davidson, that's four fewer men necessary to fight. The crimes are senseless especially in a world where there are men with nobility and race is not a dividing line. Davidson relates that he filed his report and returned to his duties as an MP.

There is a new dance at the Tynin, Louisiana, bars called "The C.J." that has really caught on with the local people. Somehow, Sergeant Waters' family received word that he had been killed in action and declared the first Negro soldier from their hometown in New Jersey to have been killed in this war. The Sergeant's picture now hangs in the V.F.W. Hall.

All the men who made up Sergeant Waters' old unit are killed in Germany, including Captain Taylor. The light expands briefly to include Captain Taylor who congratulates Davidson on a job well done in the murder investigation. Taylor also admits to being wrong about judging Davidson on his race alone and that he'll have to get used to having Negroes in command. Davidson tells Taylor that he will get used to Negro officers and the light begins to fade.

Act 2 Analysis

As the second act begins, Captain Davidson speaks of the excitement among Negro soldiers at the prospect of going into battle. Up until this time, Negroes had not been a big part of U.S. military history and this war promised more of the same. The popular thinking of the time was that the freedoms so dearly paid for in a war were not going to be granted to Negro people so there was not much interest in rallying around any military cause.

The advent of World War II gave Negroes one more opportunity to prove their vigor and courage in the hopes of achieving equality. Sergeant Waters is the icon of this line of thinking that there were black men who could fight just as well as any white man and that there should be some compensation for that in the form of a life of equality. As Sergeant Waters states in the play, this war was going to change everything for black people. Surely if the military could be integrated, then the rest of the social, political and economic spheres in America would soon follow suit.

The feeling of being held separate from their white comrades was eased just a bit in the play during the baseball games. The unit's winning streak against all the white teams

provided at least some element of superiority for these Negro soldiers. Winning was so important to Waters and the only true badge he carried in his service that at the end of the play, the men in Waters' unit retaliate for C.J.'s death in the only way they know how, by intentionally losing the last game. A win would have put the team in national news headlines.

The author makes the theme of hatred very important in this play, not only whites against blacks, but sometimes blacks against blacks. Sergeant Waters has so much self-hatred for being black and he tries everything he can to adopt white characteristics in the hope of being better accepted. His harshness toward his own men is for their own good. As Waters rationalizes, it his work is to prepare the men to survive in a white man's world and that means becoming more like white men. In the end, Waters tells Peterson this secret because Waters feels that Peterson is the strongest man in the unit and the one with the most potential. Waters passes on this bit of insight even as Peterson taunts him because in Waters' mind, this show of character is exactly what is necessary to survive.

Ironically, Waters' hatred for what he considers the low side of the black culture eventually kills C.J., which is a much harsher fate than C.J. probably would have endured existing on his own in the white man's world. C.J.'s affability was his armor while Waters wore hate. Either way, both men are dead, victims of prejudice from sources both external and internal.

The author does end the play with Captain Taylor acknowledging the emergence of Negroes in military command, which possibly symbolizes the growth and acceptance of society as a whole.

Characters

Lieutenant Byrd

Byrd is a white, by-the-book military officer. He has a history of confrontation and conflict with black soldiers. The night he is murdered, Byrd beats Waters savagely after he comes upon the sergeant drunk and sick. When questioned by Davenport, Byrd is almost insolent and has to be threaten by Taylor before he will answer.

Corporal Bernard Cobb

Cobb is in his mid to late twenties. He appears to be focused on women on the women he wants, the ones he has had, the diseases they may have given him. He is closest to C.J. and is almost unmoved by Waters's death.

Captain Richard Davenport

Davenport is an military lawyer, assigned to investigate the murder of Waters. Because he is black, the army really cannot find a place for Davenport and so has assigned him to police black soldiers. He delivers a lengthy monologue when he enters the stage for the first time. This speech tells the audience the background of the story currently being acted on stage. Other officers, most of whom are white, do not know what to make of a black officer, and he is an object of intense curiosity. Davenport is not intimidated by the reception he gets from the white officers. His investigation is thorough, and he quickly is able to delve into the events leading up to Waters's murder.

Corporal Ellis

Ellis is a by-the-book soldier. He is assigned to be Davenport's assistant and his job is to deliver the men to Davenport for questioning.

Private Louis Henson

Henson is in his late twenties. He is nervous and convinced that the Ku Klux Klan is to blame for Waters's murder. Henson is used to being subordinate. He sits back and observes actions but is reluctant to speak up. When questioned by Davenport, Henson has to be ordered to tell his story.

Private C. J. Memphis

Memphis, a young black soldier, was a special favorite of Waters. He entertained with his singing and guitar playing, and he played baseball with the troops as well. Waters likes C.J. initially, but he also sees him as representing everything that blacks need to put behind them the singing, clowning, and dancing around. C.J. is jailed after he strikes Waters, but Waters had provoked the young soldier and his arrest demoralizes the young man, who had felt that Waters liked him. C.J.'s death, two months before Waters's, sets in motion the events that follow.

Private First Class Melvin Peterson

Peterson is in his late twenties. He is the neatest of the black troops, shoes polished, his stripe clearly visible, his uniform neatly pressed. Peterson had a history of conflict with Waters, having previously come to blows in a fight with Waters. The area of conflict centered on Peterson's perception that Waters failed to support the men, allowing white soldiers to use the blacks as common laborers and not soldiers. Later when Waters arrests C.J., it is Peterson who insists that the men need to report the truth to the captain. Peterson is aggressive and not intimidated by Waters.

Private Tony Smalls

Smalls is a small man in his late thirties. He is a career soldier and appears genuinely concerned about Waters's murder. Smalls is arrested for going AWOL, and when questioned, he confesses to what he saw the night Waters was murdered.

Captain Charles Taylor

Tayor is a white, West Point educated, officer in his mid to late thirties. When he first meets Davenport, Taylor confesses that he is not comfortable with a black officer. His only experience with blacks is as workmen or subordinates, and he indicates he cannot and does not support Davenport's investigation. He is clearly displeased that Davenport is not subservient or willing to be ordered about by a man of equal rank, who is clearly, in Taylor's mind at least, superior to any blacks. Taylor reluctantly becomes Davenport's ally in the investigation. Taylor, while not believing in equality, also recognizes that blacks deserve to be given justice.

Tech Sergeant Vernon C, Waters

Waters' s murder opens the play. Thereafter, his presence on stage is as a voice from the past. He stands slightly off-stage in a pale light and recounts experiences with different individuals. Waters was all military correctness, wanting what was best for his men, but at the same time, hard on them when they disappointed him. Waters had a

son for whom he wanted a better future than the one the army offered. He planned to send both his son and daughter to a white man's college so that they would be able to compete with whites and not be left behind. Waters was a complex man who could both praise and attack his men. His goal was to rid the army of southern blacks, who he felt held the entire black community back. But when C.J. commits suicide, Waters is stunned and realizes that he is to blame.

Captain Wilcox

Wilcox is a medical officer who is accused of participating in a beating of Waters on the night he was murdered. Wilcox is the one officer who treats Davenport with respect and who appears to have no bias against blacks.

Private James Wilkie

Wilkie is a career soldier in his early forties. He has recently lost three stripes. He was closest in age to Waters, and in spite of losing rank, pay, and going to jail for ten days, Wilkie claims to have had no hard grudge against Waters. Wilkie was Waters's servant. He ran his errands, managed the ball team, and cleaned his quarters; but when Wilkie got caught drinking, Waters took all his stripes, which had taken him ten years to earn. Then as a bribe to force Wilkie to plant evidence, Waters promises to return his stripes.

Themes

Alienation

The alienation that black soldiers feel is best demonstrated by the baseball games that are played between white and blacks. The black soldiers view the baseball games as one area where they can prove superiority over white soldiers. The blacks are treated as subservient and subordinate underlings. They are not given the opportunity to be real soldiers; instead they function as little more than servants, handymen, garbage collectors, and gardeners. When these same black soldiers meet white soldiers on the baseball field, the game makes them equal, and when the black team wins, they are superior. Black soldiers emerge from the games knowing that they will be alienated and punished for winning, but their victory makes the alienation more tolerable.

Anger & Hatred

Although he disguises it, Waters really hates what he is a black man, a black soldier in the army. He is so consumed with self-hatred that he turns it upon the men in his company. Waters is given power over other men; it is a power given by whites and largely controlled by whites, but Waters thinks that if he can do the job well, that he can change the white perception of the black man. So he is harder on his men and crueler than a white officer would be, and he tries to eliminate those blacks that he thinks would be unable to compete in a white man's world. Waters sees black survival in becoming white. He hates his own black race and his history, and he turns that hatred upon his men, ultimately being responsible for the death of one of them.

Betrayal

Waters betrays his men, especially C.J., when he plants evidence that implicates the young man in a crime. The sole purpose in framing C.J. is to remove him from the company. But Waters has befriended C.J., praising his singing and playing. The reality is that Waters hates all southern blacks, whom he considers fools who are perpetuating an image of black foolishness with their singing, dancing, and clowning around. C.J. is guilty of all these actions, and in his innocence, he never suspects Waters of betrayal.

Prejudice

Captain Davenport faces prejudice when he arrives at a southern military post to conduct his investigation into Waters's death. When Captain Taylor meets Davenport, the latter is told that the white community will not tolerate a black man investigating whites. But that is not the only reason for Taylor's concern. Taylor admits that in a conversation with other white officers, most admitted they did not want to serve with black officers and could not accept blacks as equals. Indeed, when Davenport finally

interviews two white officers, Byrd and Wilcox, Byrd makes clear his distaste for the black captain. Byrd also admits that he beat Waters because the sergeant did not treat him with the respect he deserved as an officer and as a white man.

Racism

Racism is the source for the violence that occurs at this army post. Although there are many black soldiers, they are not welcome in the predominately white community that surrounds the post. When Waters's murder is discovered, initial suspicion falls on the local Ku Klux Klan, who have been responsible for attacks on black soldiers in the past. There is a clear division on the post as well, with the white officers and soldiers aligned against the blacks. The black soldiers feel that if they can only get overseas and into the war, they can prove that they are as good at killing Hitler's men as are the white soldiers. And finally, there is racism within the black community, also. Waters is guilty of racism when he turns on C.J., whose only crime is that he is from the south and represents the type of black man who Waters thinks is holding back other blacks.

Violence

Violence was too often the result of confrontations between whites and blacks. When Waters is murdered, suspicion first falls on white men, notable the Ku Klux Klan. But violence is also Waters primary way of dealing with difference. Waters identifies rural southern blacks as a hindrance to black advancement. He thinks that their singing and dancing recalls a period of ignorance and subservience that prevents blacks from achieving equality with whites. Rather than look for a way to overcome this problem, Waters seeks a solution in violence. Rather than educate these blacks, Waters has them jailed and placed in a prison population where violence becomes a means of survival; C.J.'s imprisonment leads to his death.

Style

Character

A person in a dramatic work. The actions of each character are what constitute the story. Character can also include the idea of a particular individual's morality. Characters can range from simple stereotypical figures to more complex multi-faceted ones. Characters may also be defined by personality traits, such as the rogue or the damsel in distress. "Characterization" is the process of creating a lifelike person from an author's imagination. To accomplish this the author provides the character with personality traits that help define who he will be and how he will behave in a given situation. Davenport is a black attorney, who divulges much about himself in the monologues that he uses to update the audience on the action that occurs between scenes. His character is revealed in other ways also, most notably in his confrontations with Taylor.

Drama

A drama is often defined as any work designed to be presented on the stage. It consists of a story, of actors portraying characters, and of action. But historically, drama can also consist of tragedy, comedy, religious pageant, and spectacle. In modern usage, drama explores serious topics and themes but does not achieve the same level as tragedy.

Genre

Genres are a way of categorizing literature. Genre is a French term that means "kind" or "type." Genre can refer to both the category of literature such as tragedy, comedy, epic, poetry, or pastoral. It can also include modern forms of literature such as drama novels, or short stories. This term can also refer to types of literature such as mystery, science fiction, comedy or romance. *A Soldier's Play* is a mystery.

Monologue

A monologue is a speech given by a character and principally addressed to the audience. In a monologue, the character speaking is alone on stage, or thinks he is alone, and thus he speaks the truth. This device is a way for an author to relate to the audience that the speaker really thinks, rather than what he may be telling other characters. A monologue can also be used like a Greek Chorus to give information about details that occur off stage or between acts or to comments upon action that has occurred. In *A Soldier's Play*, Davenport uses a monologue to tell the audience that has occurred behind the scenes and what he is thinking.

Plot

This term refers to the pattern of events. Generally plots should have a beginning, a middle, and a conclusion, but they may also sometimes be a series of episodes connected together. Basically, the plot provides the author with the means to explore primary themes. Students are often confused between the two terms; but themes explore ideas, and plots simply relate what happens in a very obvious manner. Thus the plot of *A Soldier's Play* is the investigation into who killed Sergeant Waters. But the themes are racism and prejudice.

Setting

The time, place, and culture in which the action of the play takes place is called the setting. The elements of setting may include geographic location, physical or mental environments, prevailing cultural attitudes, or the historical time in which the action takes place. The location for *A Soldier's Play* is an army post in the south. The cultural setting is racism and segregation and the division that occurred within the still segregated military.

Historical Context

In 1981, when Charles Fuller wrote *A Soldier's Play*, the United States military was fully integrated. In fact, the military services have been the largest equal opportunity employer of blacks for many years. But it was not always this way. Historically, blacks have been recruited into the military during wars but unceremoniously returned to civilian life once the war ended. World War II began in much the same way. For many blacks, there was no reason to want to involve themselves in this war. The experience in World War I had taught that once their services were no longer needed that blacks found they had gained nothing by their sacrifice. The freedoms they fought for were not theirs, and the country they defended rejected them. Consequently, many blacks saw World War II as a white man's war, but some, like Sergeant Waters, saw the war as an opportunity to prove that blacks were as brave, as strong, and as accountable as any white soldiers. They reasoned that blacks could shoot a weapon, fly a plane, and kill a German as well as any white man, and they wanted a chance to prove it. They also saw the war as a means to wedge a crack into the segregation that still defined American life. If the military could be integrated, then maybe other areas of American life could be opened up, as well.

During both World War I and II, the army was completely segregated. Blacks were largely restricted to non-combat units, where they were responsible for basic duties that were mostly limited to labor and not combat. In other words, blacks were largely domestics, gardeners, mechanics, and handymen. Only a few blacks were permitted to join artillery units, and these units were also segregated so that blacks fought alongside blacks, and whites fought alongside whites. With the beginning of World War II, black community leaders pressured President Roosevelt to open up aviation schools to blacks. He responded by authorizing an aviation school for blacks, but it took a lawsuit against the War Department before blacks became members of the Army Air Corps. The black unit that was formed became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. Initially no one wanted these black airmen, but eventually they found combat in North Africa and Italy where they distinguished themselves.

Toward the end of the war, black infantry units were sent to Germany, where they participated in the liberation of the concentration camps. It is difficult to imagine what they felt as these victims of American racism liberated the victims of Nazi racism in Europe. But when blacks returned to the United States after the war, they began to demand greater equality, especially in the military. This demand finally forced President Truman to sign an order that eventually led to the integration of the military, and for the first time ever, blacks would not be cashiered out of the military at war's end. Instead, after the Korean War and Vietnam, blacks became a part of a peace-time military. Prior to World War II, integration had to be forced upon white America. In 1941, President Roosevelt had to order employers and unions to cease all discrimination again blacks. In particular, he emphasized that those companies that were awarded defense contracts must not discriminate. Race riots in 1943 among defense workers signaled that integration would not come easily. It did not come easily in the military either. Although World War II made it easier for blacks to integrate the military, much of that integration

led to a greater proportion of black casualties during war. It would take many more years before blacks truly began to achieve a more equitable share of the military effort.

Critical Overview

In general, *A Soldier's Play* received very favorable reviews when it debuted Off-Broadway in November 1981. Critics were enthusiastic and audiences receptive to Fuller's mystery. For example, Frank Rich's review in *The New York Times*, calls Fuller's play a major breakthrough and "in every way, a mature and accomplished work." *A Soldier's Play* is also "a relentless investigation into the complex, sometimes cryptic pathology of hate." What Rich calls a "skillful portraiture of a dozen characters" creates "a remarkable breadth of social and historical vision." Rich is also enthusiastic about the cast, especially Charles Brown as Davenport, Denzel Washington as Peterson, and Peter Friedman as Taylor, but Rich's greatest praise is for Adolphe Caesar's performance of Waters, a role that is "hateful... one moment and a sympathetic, pitiful wreck the next." Referring to Douglas Turner Ward's direction as "superlative," Rich notes that Fuller's play "tirelessly insists on embracing volatile contradictions because that is the way to arrive at the shattering truth." John Beaumont's review for *The Christian Science Monitor* is another emphatic endorsement of Fuller's play. Beaumont calls attention to Fuller's "carefully written, tautly dramatic scenes [which] are filled with racial-psychological insights." But this reviewer also observes Fuller's use of comedic and raunchy material that sounds like the authentic voice of barracks talk. Beaumont also credits an excellent cast and the "admirable staging by Ward for the play's success.

Another endorsement comes from Edwin Wilson at the *The Wall Street Journal*. Wilson's review calls A Soldier's Play "a skillfully wrought, thoroughly suspenseful detective story." But Wilson points out that Fuller goes beyond a mystery to create, "one of the most even-handed, penetrating studies of relations among blacks-as well as their relations with whites-that we have yet seen." As is the case with other reviewers, Beaumont also singles out the cast and director as deserving special commendation, and Fuller's "complex web of conflicting attitudes and emotions" as strong elements of the play. Additional ratification for Fuller's play is supplied by Douglas Watt of the *Daily News*. Calling *A Soldier's Play* "an absorbing, interestingly-layered drama" that could use a bit of tightening, Watt states that an evening at this play is "one of the more satisfying ones in town." While Watt praises Brown and Friedman's performances, he has special kudos for Washington, Caesar, and the other actors who portray the enlisted men; these men, he says, "make up the heart of the play." Watt points to this play as Fuller's "best achievement to date." These words are echoed by Clive Barnes of the *New York Post*, who writes that "Fuller is revealing himself as a playwright of great sensibility ... [who] must be watched and, even more, cherished." After having complimented Ward's direction and the exceptional work of Caesar and Friedman, Barnes says of Brown, that "he is developing into a consummate actor" whose performance is the best of a fine cast.

Additional praise for Fuller is also provided by Jack Kroll of *Newsweek*. Kroll declares that this latest Fuller play "is a work of great resonance and integrity, bound to be one of the best American plays of this season." The story thatFuller is telling, writes Kroll, is "humanized and dramatized with a deep understanding and a sense of fatality that translate into riveting and revelatory dramatic action." Kroll also has praise for the cast,

noting the performances of Brown and Caesar as particularly remarkable. A more mixed review is offered by T.E. Kalem of *Time*, who, while dismissing the investigation as a "dry studies exercise," focuses on the way in which Fuller explores Waters complex character. Of Caesar's performance, Kalem states that Caesar "merits an acting medal of honor" for his portrayal of Waters. Another mixed critique is that of Robert Asahina, whose review appeared in the *Hudson Review*. Asahina singles out the investigation and murder mystery as mere distractions from the more important exploration of how "racism distorts the soul of not just the oppressor but the victim," which Fuller does very well, and for he "is to be commended." Asahina makes the observation that Fuller did not need to set the action in the army during 1944; any war could have provided the same setting for racism, since the attitudes that Fuller expressed are not outdated today.

Fuller's work did stir some controversy. Nearly two years after *A Soldier's Play's* debut, a particularly virulent attack appeared by Amiri Baraka, who was associated with a rival theatrical group. In his article, Baraka begins with what is intended to be a digression on how he always confuses Fuller with another writer whose work is "pretty awful." One source of Baraka's animosity is the ease with which the Negro Ensemble Company is able to raise money from big banks. Baraka is often sarcastic, criticizing both Washington's casting and Brown's acting. His lone voice of opposition, failed to stop the momentum of *A Soldier's Play*, which went on to be made into a successful movie.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Metzger is a Ph.D., specializing in literature and drama at The University of New Mexico. In this essay, she discusses how Fuller dramatizes the black soldiers' struggle and the two wars that black soldiers fought in World War II.

During World War II, the military finally succumbed to pressure to create black combat battalions. For most of the war, these units were largely for show and had very little role in the war effort, but near the end of the war when the need for more men surfaced, a few of these units were finally mobilized and sent to Europe. Some of these men, who had anticipated they would finally engage in battle, instead helped to liberate concentration camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, and Lambach. What they saw shocked them. These black soldiers, who had come from the segregation of 1940s America, were face to face with the effects of Hitler's racism. But there are other effects of racism, as Charles Fuller proves.

In *A Soldier's Play*, Fuller presents one possible effect of the racism that divides the United States in the 1940s. The black soldiers at this small Louisiana post are anxious to be sent across the ocean to fight Hitler, whom they are confident they can beat as effectively as any white soldiers can. But, as the war drags on, black soldiers sit and wait while whites are sent into battle. This is the racism of exclusion, which breeds hatred and ultimately leads to murder. In his play, Fuller demonstrates that sometimes racism can be turned inward. In *A Soldier's Play*, American racism is juxtaposed against the dark shadow of Hitler's racism. By the time the play ends, Fuller leaves the audience questioning their own prejudices and wondering if racism can be quantitatively judged.

Much of the shock that Americans felt at the end of World War II, derived from Hitler's ghastly extermination of more than 11 million people. This outrage is couched in an awareness that American society could never engage in racism is such an ugly way. But that ignores that effects of systematic racism, which dehumanizes people and consumes them slowly, over time. Sergeant Waters is an example of how racism can destroy a man. Waters readily admits that during World War I he participated in the murder of a young black man. The murder occurred in France when white soldiers took an "ignorant colored soldier. Paid him to tie a tail to his ass and parade around naked making monkey sounds." Waters and other blacks slit the black soldier's throat. He tells Wilkie that blacks must turn their backs on "fools like C.J." who would cheat their own race out of the honor and respect they deserve. Earlier, Waters tells C.J. he has gotten rid of five other soldiers at previous posts. And Waters explains that he did it because he does not want blacks cheated out of the opportunities that he thinks they will derive from fighting in World War II.

This proud admission reveals the hatred that Waters has for his fellow blacks. In his eyes, blacks must meet a higher standard that will help ensure their escape for the oppression of racism. Southern blacks, like C.J., recall stereotypes of black minstrels, who sing, dance, and clown around. Men who look like fools and behave like fools will negate all that a few good blacks can accomplish, according to Waters, who believes

that all blacks must be superior to whites if blacks are to become equal to whites. But then C. J. does the unexpected and kills himself, and suddenly Waters is forced to question what he has become. He finally understands that he has willingly destroyed another man and turned his back on his people and has achieved nothing. Whites still do not like him, and they still refuse to accept him as an equal. And the audience must finally admit that they are complicit in this tragedy because they too have tolerated racism.

In constructing this play as a detective story, Fuller seeks to involve the audience in the action on the stage. Suspects are introduced and motives explored in an attempt to keep the audience guessing. In their essay on the detective elements of *A Soldier's Play*, Linda K. Hughes and Howard Faulkner point out that Fuller manages to implicate the audience in the quest to solve the killer's identity and that "to the degree that we abandon open minds and jump to conclusions about the killer's identity at the outset, we deduce from stereotypes instead of inductively seeking the solution." This is because Fuller's red herrings are white officers and the Ku Klux Klan. The setting is the south, and the audience expects the killer of a black man to be whites.

In that sense, the audience participates in racism. Hughes and Faulkner argue that the audience initially sympathizes with Waters. At the end of the first act, he appears to be sympathetic, but as the second act unfolds, the audience learns that "Waters is, if not a racist himself, one who imposes stereotypes and rigid codes of behavior on fellow blacks." Waters' vision of racial progress does not include fools like C.J. This act of black discriminating against black, just as white can discriminate against black, or white against white is, according to Hughes and Faulkner, suggested by "Them Nazis ain't all crazy," a sentence, they argue, that "reverberates throughout the fabric of the entire play." This sentence, "reminds us that World War II was, in a sense, a racial war, a war to stop Hitler's dream of the Super Race. But black soldiers drafted to fight Hitler first had to confront a racial war of their own in the United States." Thus Waters in both victim and victimizer, according to Hughes and Faulkner, who also point out that the ending of the play tells the audiences that the entire company was wiped out in that "other racial war in Germany." Thus, the audience is again reminded that both racial wars are connected for the black soldier.

It is worth remembering that Waters is not the only black man to kill another black soldier. The play's conclusion reveals that Peterson is Waters's killer. Both, men, as Hughes and Faulkner note, "double as victimizers impelled by white racism and their own capitulation to imposed stereotypes of 'proper' black behavior. Both [Peterson and Waters] are willing to kill a fellow black to uphold that code, to 'purify' their race; and insofar as they do so, they are also eerie parallels of Hitler, whom Waters partly admires." But racism and prejudice are not limited to Peterson and Waters. Davenport initially thinks Byrd and Wilcox are guilty of the murder. He also assumes, erroneously it turns out, that other white officers are engaged in covering up a white officer's involvement. Later, Taylor, who assumes that blacks are neither intelligent enough nor devious enough to have committed the murder, wants Byrd and Wilcox arrested because he believes the two white officers must be guilty, since, clearly whites must be guilty. There is enough racism and prejudice to go around for everyone in the cast to

engage in some aspect of this bigotry. Steven Carter's analysis of Davenport's role as detective offers some insight into how Davenport fulfills the traditional role of detective. The traditional skills of the detective, include being able to, place reason over emotion, admit past and even current mistakes so that you can find truth in the present, view a situation as a whole rather than be blinded by a part, rid yourself of preconceptions so that you can see reality more clearly. And perhaps hardest and most important of all, acknowledge the destructive elements in your own personality so that you can better understand the destructive side of others.

Carter states that these skills are also effective in counteracting and eliminating racism. That Davenport is able to finally solve the case, according to Carter, "depends largely on his ability to free himself from racist preconceptions of any type." Davenport is able to stay focused on the issue at hand, but, as Carter points out, both Waters and Peterson have become so confused and so involved with in-group bickering that they almost lose sight of their real enemies, white racism at home and Nazi racist imperialism abroad." Self-hatred, the byproduct of systematic racism, is responsible for the destruction of both these men. As the play ends, Davenport tells the audience that four men were lost and that "none of their reasons nothing anyone said, or did, would have been worth a life to men with larger hearts-men less split by the madness of race in America."

Fuller asks his audience to question the effects of racism, to question their prejudices. In *A Soldier's Play*, the effects of racial self-hatred lead two men to murder, for Waters murders C.J. just as surely as if he had tied the noose. The audience is asked to consider that ordinary men are capable of murder when pushed to extraordinary lengths. William W. Demastes, in an article that questions the role of prejudice in Fuller's play, observes that the typical murder mystery looks to the extreme or atypical conditions that lead to murder, such as the Ku Klux Klan confronting radical blacks. Instead, says Demastes, Fuller "challenges the standard, comfortable assumptions that tensions exist only between such radical elements of both races." The racism that resulted in Nazi concentration camps shocked people, as it should. But Fuller would like his audience to consider that racism that results in blacks murdering blacks is also shocking and deserving of greater thought. When Waters real intent toward C.J. is revealed and when Peterson is disclosed as the murderer, the audience should be dismayed as well as stunned. And they should question their own prejudices.

Source: Sheri E. Metzger, for *Drama for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

Asahina examines Fuller's play, citing its recent Pulitzer Prize victory as well-deserved. In appraising the racial themes of the drama, the critic credits Fuller with "creating a truly tragic character" in Sergeant Waters.

For a change, this year's Pulitzer Prize actually went to the season's most deserving work: Charles Fuller's *A Soldier's Play*, produced by the Negro Ensemble Company and directed by Douglas Turner Ward. But it deserves criticism as well as praise.

Set in 1944, *A Soldier's Play* could also have been written then; it is a straightforward piece of psychological realism that takes the form of a murder mystery. In the first scene, Vernon C. Waters (Adolph Caesar), a Tech/Sergeant in the 221st Chemical Smoke Generating Company, is killed by two unknown assailants. Waters is black, as are the other noncoms and enlisted men at Fort Neal, Louisiana, in the year before the end of World War II. Suspecting that the killers are white and fearing a racial conflict between the soldiers and the residents of the nearby town of Tynan, the white officers restrict their troops to the base and order an investigation.

A black captain, Richard Davenport (Charles Brown), assigned to the military police, arrives at Fort Neal to conduct the inquiry (and to narrate the play, which largely consists of flashbacks). Davenport is reluctantly assisted by a white captain, Charles Taylor (Peter Friedman), a West Pointer who makes known his antagonism by aggressively announcing, "I never saw a Negro until I was twelve or thirteen." Still, it is clear to both of them that the investigation is supposed to fail, since everyone assumes that the murderers are white and will thus be impossible to bring to justice in the South. "Don't take yourself too seriously," Taylor warns Davenport, who sardonically acknowledges that "the matter was given the lowest priority."

Nonetheless, the black captain persists, eventually daring to cast suspicion on two white officers, Lieutenant Byrd (Sam McMurray) and Captain Wilcox (Stephen Zettler). By this time, Taylor has grudgingly come to respect Davenport's efforts; in fact, he is even more eager than his black colleague to bring charges against his fellow whites. But Davenport has begun to believe that the case is more than an incident of racial violence. His questioning of the black soldiers gradually leads him and us to the uncomfortable realization that the murder was committed by someone under Waters' command.

As the captain digs deeper, a complex portrait of the dead sergeant emerges from the flashbacks that spring out of the interrogation sessions around which the play is structured. A veteran of World War I, Waters is a career man and a strict disciplinarian who expects his troops to toe the white man's line as squarely as he does. When he busts Corporal James Wilkie (Steven A. Jones) to the rank of private for being drunk on duty, Waters complains, "No wonder they treat us like dogs." His favorite target for abuse is a Southern black, Private C. J. Memphis (David Alan Grier), who represents everything he despises. Pleasant but slow-witted, Memphis is the star of the company baseball team, as well as a mournful blues guitarist and singer. But to Waters, a

Northerner, Memphis is nothing but an embarrassing exemplar of a "strong black buck." "Niggers aren't like that today," the sergeant sneers.

Waters is no simple Uncle Tom, however. "This country's at war," he tells his men, "and you niggers are soldiers." To him, they must be more than good soldiers they must be the best, for their own sake if not the army's. "Most niggers just don't care," heclaims. "But not havin's no excuse for not gettin'. We got to challenge the man in his arena." In his twisted way, Waters truly believes that the black race can only advance by following his example by being better than the white man at his own game. "Do you know the damage one ignorant Negro can do?" he asks Memphis. "The black race can't afford you laughin' and clownin'."

Davenport soon learns the lengths to which Waters went to "close our ranks on the chittlins and collard greens style." During the year before his death, the company team had been so successful that a game with the Yankees was in the works if the Fort Neal soldiers were to win their conference title. But the better the troops do on the field, the worse they do on the base. "Every time we beat them at baseball," the soldiers complain about their white opponents, "they get back at us any way they can" in work details ranging from KP to painting the officers' club. Waters, of course, believes "these men need all the discipline they can get," since he regards their athletic achievements as frivolous, even dangerous, because they reinforce the white man's stereotype of the black.

To his horror, Davenport discovers that Waters found a way of eliminating Memphis while simultaneously sabotaging the team. The sergeant framed the hapless private for a mysterious shooting on the base ("one less fool for the race to be ashamed of'), and when Memphis killed himself in the stockade, the players threw the championship game in protest. But the cost of Waters' demented discipline was a growing desire for vengeance among his troops. As Davenport finally determines, two of them Private First Class Melvin Peterson (Denzel Washington) and Private Tony Smalls (Brent Jennings) took matters into their own hands and killed their tormentor. Yet even at the moment of his death, Waters had the last word, or words the same ones that opened the play. "You got to be like them," he cries in torment. "But the rules are fixed. It doesn't make any difference. They still hate you."

Whatever else can be said about *A Soldier's Play*, Fuller must be credited for creating a truly tragic character for whom those words are an anguished, self-proclaimed epitaph. It is in Waters that the toll of racism is most apparent. To be sure, all the black characters in the drama are representative of different modes of dealing with white oppression: the cautious rationality of Davenport, the self-abasement of Wilkie (brilliantly brought to life by Jones), the unenlightened self-interest of Smalls. Likewise, Memphis embodies the black past, stolid and humble, just as surely as Peterson does the future, or at least one possible future: righteous but also arrogant.

Yet Waters is unique among the men by being both the engineer of his own downfall and the victim of his circumstances; like all genuinely tragic figures, he attains universality because of rather than despite the stubborn reality of his particularity. From

the smallest of his affectations the pompous, gravelly voice, the pipe-smoking, the military carriage, the cultivated disdain for his inferiors to the enormity of his crimes against his own people in their name, the costs of Waters' unnatural, willful assimilation are painfully apparent. ("Any man don't know where he belongs," says Memphis, "got to be in a lot of pain.") Fuller's resolute writing and Caesar's forceful acting have created a truly unlikeable yet strangely sympathetic character, unpleasant yet unexpectedly revealing of what we fear as the worst accommodationist impulses in ourselves.

Unfortunately, Fuller does not handle the investigation into Waters' violent death as ably as he does the sergeant's tortured life. Somehow the murder mystery comes to dominate the other elements of the play; the larger problems of human behavior in adverse circumstances become secondary to the whodunit questions of motive and opportunity. True, the investigation gives the drama a certain forward momentum, but not enough to disguise the fact that almost everything interesting takes place in the past. The most compelling figure is the victim, whose life is revealed in flashback; the action in the present is, for the most part, structured according to the familiar strategy of revelations leading to further revelations and ultimately to a rather comfortable resolution.

Not too comfortable, mind you; Fuller is to be commended for honestly exposing how racism distorts the soul of not just the oppressor but the victim. For this genuine revelation (as opposed to the convenient revelations that advance the plot) to matter to us, however, it must matter to the character through whose eyes we perceive it. And it is not unreasonable to expect that Davenport's discoveries will change him somehow. After all, he began his inquiry more or less convinced that the killers were white, and then had to overcome his own prejudices to uncover the truth. He could also see something of himself in Waters. Though younger, the captain must have had to pay the same dues as the sergeant perhaps even more, to rise to the higher rank.

Yet Davenport maintains an eerie emotional distance throughout (which is underscored by Brown's rather affectless performance; he is so cool that he practically freezes into rigidity). Perhaps Fuller thereby meant to comment on the captain's notion of soldierly conduct, which causes him to be almost color-blind. Indeed, early in the play, Davenport rebuffs Wilkie's presumption of racial familiarity ("You all we got down here," the private claims).

But this sort of irony seems absent elsewhere, particularly from the author's decision to set the play so far in the past. (I do not think the drama required the segregated army, which came to an end after the war; in fact, the play might have been more pointed had it been set after integration. As for the war itself, it could as easily have been Korea or Vietnam or no war at all, for all the difference it makes to the action.) Did Fuller believe that the attitudes represented by, say, Memphis and Waters would seem outdated today? That Davenport, too, would seem anachronistic, or even Peterson insufficiently militant? Or did he think (or does he recognize) that setting *A Soldier's Play* in 1944 somehow lets all of us playwright, cast, audience off the hook? Or was it that he wanted all concerned to consider the drama as art rather than as "relevant" social comment? It is not that I suspect Fuller's motives it is just that I don't know what they are.

Source: Robert Asahina. "Theatre Chronicle" in the *Hudson Review*, Vol. XXXV, no. 3, Autumn, 1982, pp. 439-42.

Critical Essay #3

Calling A Soldier's Play a "flawed but estimable" work, Oilman offers a mostly favorable review, noting that Fuller's play is representative of the growth of the Negro Ensemble Company that produced the drama.

After fourteen seasons, the Negro Ensemble Company can no longer be regarded as an exotic enterprise on the fringe. The N.E.C. came into being because the established American theater didn't seem to have any place for the black experience. So the group proceeded to carve such a place for itself, with determination if not always a clear notion of what it was doing. Its stance was either aggressive, that of an adversary, or defensive, which meant insular and self-validating; it stumbled, fell, rose and kept going.

Never quite a true ensemble, in that it frequently brings in performers for particular productions, the company has had difficulty creating an identifiable style, a way of doing things unmistakably its own. If it still has that difficulty, at least its repertory has become much more flexible, so that its socially oriented realism has lost some of the pugnacious, parochial quality that once marred it.

Charles Fuller's *A Soldier's Play*, the opening production of the N.E.C.'s fifteenth season, is exemplary of this change and, as I see it, this growth. A flawed but estimable play, it's about the black experience but is supple enough in its thematic range and social perspectives to treat that experience as part of a complex whole, as part of American reality in its widest sense. To be released from an adversary position may mean a loss of fierceness it certainly means a reduction in ideological thunder but it can make for an increase in subtle wisdom and intellectual rigor.

Not that *A Soldier's Play* is a triumph of the dramatic imagination. But it is intelligent and morally various enough to overcome some basic uncertainties and remnants of the N.E.C.'s older confrontational manner, and so commend itself to our attention. Set in a Louisiana army camp in 1944, the play deals with the fatal shooting of a black sergeant (reflecting the times, blacks are called "negroes" or "coloreds"), a martinet who, out of shame at his people's seeming acceptance of their inferior status, is tougher on his own men than are their white officers.

He's far from likable, but when he's killed and the culprits aren't found, the mood turns ugly among the black soldiers. At first, the Klan is suspected, then some white officers, but the brass wants no trouble and the incident is shunted aside. Finally, an investigator is sent from Washington, a black lieutenant with a law degree from Howard University. His relationship with the white captain previously in charge of the case makes up the moral and psychological center of the drama, which on one level proceeds as a moderately absorbing detective story.

The captain, an earnest liberal, is convinced he knows who the killers are but feels his hands are tied, and he grows impatient with the black officer's slow, careful inquiry. The real problem, however, is the dislocation the captain experiences in his abstract good

will. "I can't get used to it," he tells the black man, "your uniform, your bars." Still, he comes to accept the investigator, whose mind is much more in tune with reality than his own and who eventually brings the case to a surprising conclusion. Along the way there are some deft perceptions about both political and psychological matters, and a jaunty historical sense: "Look out, Hitler," a soldier says, "the niggers is comin' to get your ass."

The biggest burden the play carries is the direction of Douglas Turner Ward, the N.E.C.'s artistic director, who is also a well-known playwright. Ward manages the many flashbacks, through which the action is propelled, with a heavy hand: lights go up or down with painful slowness, figures from the past *take their places* obediently in the present. There are also some soft spots among the performances and an unpleasant ending, or coda, in which the black officer gratuitously reminds his white colleague of the lessons taught and learned. Yet in its calm concern for prickly truths and its intellectual sobriety, A Soldier's Play elicits the audience's approval, if not its boisterous enthusiasm.

Source: Richard Oilman. Review of *A Soldier's Play* in the *Nation,* Vol. 234, no. 3, January 23, 1982, pp. 90-91.

Adaptations

In 1984, *A Soldier's Play* was adapted for the screen from Fuller's play as *A Soldier's Story*. The movie starred many of the same actors from the theatrical production, including Adolphe Caesar, Denzel Washington, and Larry Riley. Howard Rollins, Wings Hauser, and David Alan Grier also starred. Norman Jewson directed the film, with a musical score by Herbie Hancock. The film won several awards, including the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Screenplay and the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Award for Best Supporting Actor (Adolphe Caesar). Academy Award nominations included Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Picture, and Best Supporting Actor (Caesar). Columbia Tristar Video is the distributor or this 101 minute film.

Topics for Further Study

Research the role of black soldiers in World War II. Blacks did not fare well after the end of World War I; in view of this experience, what did they hope to change by fighting in this second war?

Investigate the history of the Ku Klux Klan. Why did it seem to Henson that the Klan must be responsible for Waters's death?

Compare the film version of *A Soldier's Play*, now titled *A Soldier's Story*, with the theatrical play. How are the characters revealed and the mystery maintained in the film?

Compare Davenport and Taylor. Each is a captain and each is concerned with justice, but each man has a different plan on how to resolve the murder. How are they alike? How are they different?

Waters' s motive in framing C.J. is to rid the army of those he considers to be southern black fools, who hold back all blacks and prevent their success in a white world. Research the economic status of rural blacks in the 1940s and compare it to that of northern blacks. Is there a large disparity in wages?

Compare and Contrast

1944: The cost of living rises almost 30% in one year. For blacks, who already live at or below the poverty line, this inflation makes existence even more difficult.

1981: Inflation is so great that in an effort to help cut the budget, President Reagan orders that the school lunch program cut back on serving vegetables. In response, the Department of Agriculture declares that ketchup is a vegetable.

Today: The economy continues to grow, with unemployment low and the Dow Jones tops the 10,000 mark.

1944: Women become the backbone of the nations workforce, and the term "Rosie the Riveter " becomes the nickname for women who are now building the machines of war.

1981: Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman jurist on the U.S. Supreme Court

Today: While women appear to be equal members of the nations work force, the "glass ceiling " in many companies means that some women still earn only 70% of men's salaries.

1944: Prior to the war, blacks had played baseball only in the Negro league. Baseball is curtailed temporarily during the war years; however, women's baseball, The All-American Girls' Baseball League, draws almost a million spectators. After the war ends, Jackie Robinson becomes the first black man to integrate professional baseball

1981: Baseball is fully integrated, with black players, such as Curt Flood of the St Louis Cardinals, helping to create free agency. However, women are still denied access to professional baseball.

Today: Some of baseball's biggest stars, including Ken Griffey Jr., are black, but women are still excluded from major league baseball.

1944: There has been little opportunity for blacks during the war boom production. Where jobs have been plentiful, conflicts over housing and transportation have caused riots in several major U.S. cities.

1981: President Reagan's social and economic programs hit blacks especially hard. Many AIDS victims are minorities, especially black drug users, and little effort is being made to fund research while the victims are largely black and Hispanic. Unemployment among blacks is at record levels and will climb to 45% in Los Angeles by the mid 1980s.

Today: Unemployment is low, but the surplus of jobs is largely in the lower salaried areas; in one area, professional sports, black athletes, such as Carl Lewis, Florence Griffith-Joyner, Michael Jordan, and Tiger Woods prove that blacks can achieve economic benefit from their athletic talents and escape the poverty that holds so many other blacks.

What Do I Read Next?

Charles Fuller's *The Brownsville Raid* (1976) examines a 1906 incident that resulted in the dishonorable discharge of 167 black soldiers from the 25th Infantry.

Charles Fuller's *Zooman and the Sign* (1980) is about the quest for justice after a young girl dies and no one in the black community will identify the killer.

Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II (1993), edited by Phillip McGuire, provides an authentic voice from black soldiers.

The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II, by Mary Motley (1987), consists of a series of interviews with black officers and enlisted men who served in the military.

Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in World War II (1992) by Lou Potter, William Miles, and Nina Rosenblum, relates the experiences of black soldiers who liberated concentration camps of Buchenwald, Dachau, and Lambach. This book is based on a documentary by PBS and is available as a 90 minute video from Direct Cinema Limited in Santa Monica, CA.

Hondon B. Hargrove's *Buffalo Soldiers in Italy: Black Americans in World War II* (1985) tells the story of the black soldier's experience during World War II.

Further Study

Cooper, Michael L. *The Double V Campaign: African Americans and World War II*, Lodestar Books, 1998.

This book is designed for adolescents, ages 9-12. Cooper describes the problems black soldiers faced as they fought two wars, one against a foreign enemy and one against racism in the United States.

Dryden, Charles W. *A-Train: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman*, University of Alabama Press, 1997.

This is a personal account of Dryden desire to be a pilot during World War II and how his belief in himself helped him to succeed.

Harriott, Esther, ed. *American Voices: Five Contemporary Playwrights in Essays and Interviews*, McFarland & Company, 1988, pp. 112-125.

In this 1982 interview, Fuller discusses his work and the process of adapting A Soldier's Play to film.

Hay, Samuel A. African American Theatre: A Historical and Critical Analysis, Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Traces the history of Black theatre from its origin as 19th-century social protest.

Sandier, Stanley. *Segregated Skies: All-Black Combat Squadrons of WW II*, Smithsonian History of Aviation Series, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

This is the story of the Tuskegee Airmen, as told by a military historian, who recounts the story behind the formation of the squadron and their role in the war.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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.

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

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

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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 Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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

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