Steppenwolf Study Guide

Steppenwolf by Hermann Hesse

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Hermann Hesse's novel *Der Steppenwolf* (English translation, *Steppenwolf* [1929]), was first published in 1927. It is one of the major novels by the renowned German writer and was extremely popular amongst young people in the United States in the 1960s. The counterculture of that decade took inspiration from the fact that the protagonist of the novel, Harry Haller, makes use of sex and hallucinatory drugs as a means of fulfillment and self-discovery. Haller is a self-hating, fifty-year-old intellectual who despises the bourgeois culture in which he lives. Through encounters with various people, including two prostitutes and a drug-dispensing saxophone player, he embarks on a search for psychic wholeness and spiritual understanding. The novel combines realistic and surrealistic techniques and is strongly autobiographical, since between 1924 and 1926, when he was writing the novel, Hesse went through a crisis similar to that faced by Haller. Like Haller, whose initials the author shares, Hesse felt depressed and tried to shake it off by sensual indulgence. The protagonist of the novel resembles Hesse in other ways, too, including his temperament and his tastes in music and literature. In writing *Steppenwolf*, Hesse used the stuff of personal experience to create a dense novel that promotes uninhibited psychological exploration and spiritual aspiration.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: Swiss

Nationality 2: German

Birthdate: 1877

Deathdate: 1962

German poet and novelist Hermann Hesse was born on July 2, 1877, in the small town of Calw, in the German state of Württemberg. His father, Johannes, worked for a publishing house and had also, along with his wife Marie Gundert, been a missionary in India.

In 1891, Hesse entered the Protestant Theological Seminary at Maulbronn, but he ran away from the seminary after six months, and his father removed him from the school in May 1892. Even at this young age, Hesse had already decided he wanted to be a poet. He worked in a clock factory and then as an apprentice in a bookshop in Tübingen, during which time he read widely, especially the work of Goethe and the German Romantic poets.

Hesse's first volume of poetry was published in 1899, and his first novel, *Peter Camenzind* in 1904. The success of the novel ensured that Hesse was able to make a living as a freelance writer. He followed this with another novel, *Unterm Rad* in 1906 (*The Prodigy* [1957]; *Beneath the Wheel* [1969]), which was a fierce attack on the educational system.

Hesse married Maria Bernoulli in 1904, and they settled in Switzerland. They had three sons.

In 1911, Hesse traveled to India, which sparked his interest in Indian spirituality, an interest that culminated in the publication in 1922 of his novel *Siddhartha*, about the early life of the Buddha. From 1912 to 1919, Hesse lived in Bern, Switzerland. He volunteered for military service when World War I broke out in 1914 but was deemed unfit to serve. Instead, he was assigned to the German Embassy in Bern.

During the war, his wife developed a mental illness, and Hesse himself came close to a nervous breakdown. He underwent extensive psychoanalysis by a disciple of Carl Jung. His marriage finally broke up, and in 1919, he moved without his family to the village of Montagnola, near Lugano, in southern Switzerland, where he lived for the rest of his life. He became a Swiss citizen in 1923.

In 1919, Hesse published *Demian*, a novel that addresses the moral and spiritual crisis facing young people in Germany in the aftermath of the catastrophic World War I. The book was an immediate success, and it established Hesse's reputation as one of the foremost German writers of the period.

In 1924, Hesse married Ruth Wenger, but the marriage lasted only three years. He married for the third time, to Ninon Dolbin, in 1931.

Hesse's next major work was *Steppenwolf* (1927), followed by *Narziss und Goldmund* (1927) (*Death and the Lover* [1930]; *Narcissus and Goldmund* [1968]), and the work that many consider to be his masterpiece, *Magister Ludi* (1949) (*The Glass Bead Game* [1969]), which was published in 1943 in Zurich, Switzerland, after the Nazi authorities in Germany refused permission to publish. During World War II, Hesse's works were declared undesirable by Nazi Germany, and no reprints of his novels were allowed.

In 1946, Hesse was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Goethe Prize. After this, he wrote no more major works. Hesse died on August 9, 1962, at the age of eighty-five, in Montagnola, from a cerebral hemorrhage.

Plot Summary

Preface

The preface to *Steppenwolf* is told in the first person by a man who recalls his acquaintance with Harry Haller, the Steppenwolf (□wolf of the Steppes□). Haller was a man of about fifty who rented two rooms on the top floor of the house owned by the narrator's aunt. In the narrator's view, he was unsociable, shy, wild, and lonely, seemingly coming from another world than the comfortable bourgeois existence enjoyed by the narrator. However, Haller was a quiet, polite lodger, and the narrator's aunt took to him immediately. As the narrator gradually got to know Haller, he found him intellectually gifted and emotionally deep. The narrator had also suffered a lot and seemed full of self-hatred. Haller lived a disorderly life and followed no profession. He slept until late in the morning and spent his days with his books, which included many volumes of German poetry. He complained of poor digestion and insomnia. The narrator felt compassion for Haller's forlorn life, although one day he saw him happy in the company of an attractive young lady.

One day the Steppenwolf disappeared, and the narrator has no idea where he went. Haller left behind him a manuscript about himself, which the narrator sees as a document not only of the Steppenwolf's deeply troubled state of mind, but also of the sickness of the entire society.

Harry Haller's Records: □For Madmen Only□

Haller begins his manuscript by writing how he despises bourgeois comfort, the mediocre optimism of the middle classes. He hates the petty conventions of life, its comforts and domesticity, preferring extremes, either of pain or pleasure. He then goes on to describe how after a pleasantly mediocre day, he went for a walk in the evening. As he walks, he reviews his discontent with the age of spiritual blindness in which he believes he lives, and he recalls moments in which he awakened to a higher kind of life, although these moments never lasted for long. In a dark alley, he stumbles upon an old building on which he sees a sign: □Magic Theater: Entrance Not For Everybody.□ He also sees a sign: □For Madmen Only.□ But he cannot get into the building. He walks on and takes refuge in a tavern that he often visits. On his way home, he returns to the place where he saw the mysterious message, and a man he does not know hands him a little book.

Treatise on the Steppenwolf

When Haller returns home, he reads the title of the book: □*Treatise on the Steppenwolf. Not for Everybody*.□ The treatise is an examination of the character and personality of Haller, written in the third person by an anonymous, objective observer. According to the treatise, Haller is divided between two natures, man and wolf. Each tries to sabotage

the other. When he is a man, he is capable of beautiful thoughts and he behaves in a civilized way, but the wolf in him scorns this. When the wolf is the ascendant, he hates and despises humanity, valuing what is free and savage, strong and untamable. But then the man in Haller spoils the pleasure his wolf-like nature takes in being what it is. The Steppenwolf is, therefore, always in conflict with himself. Because of this intractable conflict, he has a tendency to suicide. When he was forty-seven years old, he vowed that he would take his own life on his fiftieth birthday, and this thought gives him some comfort.

The Steppenwolf stands as an outsider in bourgeois society which values comfort and a quiet life over principle and spiritual and intellectual integrity. In contrast to bourgeois mediocrity and compromise, the Steppenwolf knows the heights and the depths of life; he has an impulse to become either the saint or the sinner. It may be that he will be able to reconcile the conflicting elements in him, but he will have to look deeply into his own soul and know himself fully. Then he will realize that it is a simplification for him to see himself merely as a dual personality. He is, in fact a multitude of individualities, like everyone else, and to save himself he must know and embrace all aspects of his being, beyond his conscious personality.

Haller's Encounter with the Professor

When Haller has finished reading the treatise, he knows he must either take his own life or try to understand himself in a new way. Since he has been through many changes in his life and does not relish going through more upheavals, he resolves to take his own life in the near future.

One day he follows a funeral procession in town and listens to the service at the graveside. He is disgusted by the insincerity of the sentiments expressed. Walking on, he encounters an old acquaintance of his, a professor of oriental religion, who invites him for dinner that evening at his home. Haller accepts the invitation although he does not want to go. The evening turns out to be a disaster. The professor denounces as a traitor a man named Haller who is named in the newspaper as having stated that Germany was just as guilty as its enemies for the outbreak of World War I. The Steppenwolf does not tell the professor and his wife that he himself is the man named. After dinner, Haller makes an insulting remark about a small engraving of Goethe to which he has taken a dislike, without knowing that the engraving is one of the most treasured possessions of the professor's wife. Then Haller informs the professor that he is the man mentioned in the newspaper, and he rebukes the professor for his nationalistic and militaristic attitudes.

Meeting Hermine

After leaving the professor's house, Haller paces the streets. He cannot go home because he knows that if he does so, he will end up cutting his throat, and he fears death. Finding himself in an unfamiliar part of town, he enters a hotel called the Black

Eagle, where he meets a charming young lady who takes an interest in him and asks him to dance. Haller is forced to decline since he has never learned to dance. He relates the story of his evening at the professor's home, and she tells him he is being childish. When she goes off to dance, he is so tired he falls asleep and dreams that he is meeting Goethe. When he wakes, the young woman returns. They agree to meet again for dinner the following Tuesday.

His spirits revived by the chance encounter with the woman and his dream of Goethe, Haller stays the night in a room at the hotel. When he meets the young woman at a restaurant, he learns that her name is Hermine. In spite of the fact that she is a prostitute, he is captivated by her. She seems to know everything about him, and she enables him to break through his isolation. She says that her purpose is to make him fall in love with her and that he must obey her every command. Her last command, she says, will be for him to kill her, but she does not explain what she means by this.

At the end of the evening, Hermine insists that he buy a gramophone so she can teach him the foxtrot in his rooms. He reluctantly agrees, and within a few days she gives him two dance lessons, both of which he hates, and then she announces that he must dance with her the next day at a restaurant. At the restaurant, he is persuaded by Hermine to ask a beautiful young woman to dance. Haller manages to pluck up his courage, and to his surprise, the young lady accepts his invitation. He later finds out that the woman is named Maria, and she is a friend of Hermine.

Haller's Awakening with Maria

Gradually, Haller gets used to dancing and to jazz, the kind of music he used to dislike. Before, he had despised people who went to dances and the like merely seeking pleasure, but now he becomes one of them, even though sometimes he feels he is a traitor to everything he regards as sacred.

One night he returns to find Maria in his bed, sent there by Hermine. He spends the night with her, and in subsequent days, she helps him discover the delights of the senses as well of dance halls, cinemas, bars, and other places where people gather for pleasure. He also indulges in drugs, such as cocaine and opium, supplied to him by Pablo, a saxophone player and friend of Hermine. This is a world in which Maria and Hermine are completely at home, although it is entirely new for Haller. For a few weeks, he is happy; it seems to him that Maria is the only woman he has ever really loved, although he knows that she has many other loves. But he also guesses that his happiness will be short-lived, and for some reason, he longs for the suffering that will make him ready to die.

One evening Haller attends a masked ball. He is nervous and does not arrive until late, having spent part of the evening at the cinema, watching a film about Moses and the Israelites in Egypt. When he arrives at the ball, he finds the atmosphere oppressive and is about to leave when his mood is suddenly transformed. He dances with a masked Spanish girl, who turns out to be Maria, and then he finds Hermine, who is dressed as a

boy and reminds Haller of his boyhood friend, Herman. Haller dances for two hours with various women and is intoxicated by the atmosphere created by dancing, music, and wine. He feels the joy of merging his individual personality in the crowd.

The Magic Theater

When the ball is almost over, Haller encounters Pablo who invites him to a small room, gives him some opium and invites him to enter a □magic theater,□ a surreal world in which he experiences, as Pablo puts it, □the world of your own soul that you seek.□ Through the magic theater, Haller is to experience the unconscious elements of his personality, aspects of himself that he has ignored or pushed away. Looking at a large mirror on the wall, he sees a multitude of reflections of himself, at all ages and in all guises. Then he is alone again and opens a door that says, □GREAT HUNT IN AUTOMOBILES.□ He finds himself witnessing a war between men and machines. Taking the side of men, he and a former school friend named Gustav join the fight against a mechanized civilization based on narrow rationality that has impoverished life. They shoot at drivers and destroy several cars.

After this strange adventure ends, Haller stands again in the corridor and decides to goes through a door marked □GUIDANCE IN THE BUILDING UP OF THE PERSONALITY. SUCCESS GUARANTEED.□ In the room in which he finds himself, a man who resembles Pablo shows him through the use of a chessboard how the art of living is a game involving every element of the personality in constantly changing relationships. The next door Haller opens shows him the □MARVELOUS TAMING OF THE STEPPENWOLF,□ a bizarre scene from a booth in a fair in which first a man enslaves a wolf and then a wolf enslaves a man. Haller is horrified at this reminder of what he read in the treatise about the dual nature he believes he possesses. The next door he goes through, □ALL GIRLS ARE YOURS,□ is altogether more pleasant. He is once more a boy of fifteen with his first love, a girl named Rosa. But this time, instead of being too shy and polite to confess his love, he tells Rosa that he loves her. Starting with Rosa, Haller gets to relive all the loves of his life, but with happier outcomes in which his love is returned.

The final door Haller goes through in the magic theater is marked □HOW ONE KILLS FOR LOVE.□ After a surreal encounter with his idol, Mozart, Haller enters the last door of the magic theater. He sees Hermine and Pablo lying naked asleep on the floor, and it is obvious to him that they have just made love. He stabs Hermine under her breast, killing her. Although he is only killing her image in the magic theater, he does not at the time appear to know this, nor does he know whether his act was good or bad. Then Mozart enters, bringing with him a radio, which he arranges so that it plays some music by Handel. Haller recoils from the poor reproduction of the music he so much reveres, but Mozart rebukes him. What he hears is still the divine music of Handel. It may be distorted, but it can still be recognized, and there is a lesson in this for life, too. Life may distort the ideal, but it cannot wholly erase it.

Haller confesses to feeling guilty about having killed Hermine, and he imagines himself tried and convicted. But instead of being condemned to death as he desires, he is sentenced to □eternal life.□ In other words, there is to be no easy escape. Mozart consoles him, telling him he must keep listening to the wireless (radio) of life until he can learn to be like one of the immortals, to □reverence the spirit behind it□ and also to laugh at its absurdities. Then Mozart suddenly turns into Pablo, who tells Haller that they are still in the magic theater, which will always be at his service. Haller feels that he understands everything now. He is ready to continue the game of life and traverse new roads of self-discovery.

Characters

Bourgeois Narrator

The bourgeois narrator is the nephew of Haller's landlady. He narrates the novel's preface, reporting on his acquaintance with Haller and his observations about Haller's character and personality. Unlike Haller, the middle-class narrator lives an orderly, respectable life, full of predictable routine; he goes to work at an office each day, and he values punctuality. Also unlike Haller, he neither smokes or drinks.

Erica

Erica is the estranged lover of Haller. He reports that he meets her occasionally, but for some reason she is angry with him and they quarrel.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), a German poet, novelist, dramatist, and essayist, was one of the greatest writers Germany has produced. Haller is an admirer of Goethe, and he is greatly offended when, visiting the home of the professor, he sees a portrait of the great man that does not capture Goethe's true spirit. In one of the surreal episodes in the novel, Haller dreams that he meets Goethe. He reproaches him for being insincere in his work and presenting too optimistic a vision of human life. Goethe evades his question playfully, saying that Haller should not take things so seriously, and he laughs and dances.

Gustav

Gustav is Haller's boyhood friend. Haller meets him again through the □magic theater,□ when Gustav accompanies him in the war against the automobiles.

Harry Haller

Harry Haller, the protagonist and narrator of much of the novel, is known as the Steppenwolf. A divorced man nearing fifty years of age, Haller is an intellectual. He has published work on poetry and music and the metaphysics of art. He loves Goethe and Mozart and believes their work belongs on an immortal plane of life. But Haller is not a happy man. He is in poor health, suffering from gout and insomnia, and he does not fit well into bourgeois society. Living in two rented rooms in a city, he is an outsider, a solitary man, □a melancholy hermit in a cell encumbered by books,□ as he describes himself. He is lonely, since he sees his one friend, Erica, only occasionally, and even then they quarrel. But he will not seek out company because he despises comfortable,

bourgeois respectability and mediocrity and prefers to experience the heights and depths of life, apparently through his appreciation of music and literature. When he finds himself drifting through tolerable days in which nothing much either good or bad happens to him, he says that he would sooner feel □the very devil burn in [him]□ than accept this □slumbering god of contentment.□ He longs for strong emotions and sensations, not the kind of flat, sterile life that he believes is the bourgeois norm. He also finds himself at odds with the prevailing nationalism and militarism in Germany, convinced that it will lead to another war.

Haller has thought deeply about his own nature. He feels that he has a dual personality, divided between normal human emotions and feelings that lead to benevolent actions and what he describes as his wolf nature, which is strong, wild, ruthless, and solitary, and he despises humans for their vanity and stupidity. The man and the wolf in Haller are perpetually at war with each other. He can be sociable and friendly and pleasant, but then the wolf surfaces, and he behaves in socially unacceptable ways, as when he rudely criticizes the picture of Goethe in the professor's house. It is the wolf element within him that leads him to describe himself as □that beast astray who finds neither home nor joy nor nourishment in a world that is strange and incomprehensible to him.□ Haller feels so out of place in the world that he plans to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. However, his life changes after he meets Hermine, who befriends him and introduces him to a world which formerly, because of his intellectual snobbery, he had despised. Instead of staying in his room reading his books of German poetry, he learns to dance and to enjoy worldly living, and doing so includes having a sexual relationship with the prostitute Maria. Through his new friends and his experiments with taking drugs given to him by Pablo that open him up to the unconscious elements of his mind, he learns to understand life in a more balanced way, accepting the many-sidedness of his being, instead of seeing himself divided into two fixed elements, man and wolf.

Herman

Herman was a childhood friend of Harry Haller. When Haller meets Hermine, her boyish appearance reminds him of Herman, a resemblance that becomes even more acute when Hermine dresses like a man at the fancy dress ball.

Hermine

Hermine is an friendly and charming prostitute, pale and pretty, whom Haller meets at a tavern called The Black Eagle. She has a rather boyish appearance, and Haller later realizes that she reminds him of his boyhood friend, Herman. When he first meets Hermine, Haller is in despair, but she listens to his tale of woe and seems to understand him. She takes charge of him and decides to teach him some of the simple things in life, such as dancing, that he, with all his intellectual accomplishments, has failed to learn. She refuses to accept any gifts from him, even though accepting such things from men is a part of her profession. Her role is to encourage Haller to experience all the sensual

aspects of life that as a stiff intellectual he has scorned. She tells him not to take life so seriously, and she introduces him to Maria and sends her to his bed because she thinks it is high time he slept with a pretty young woman.

For his part, Haller is fascinated by Hermine. She is everything he is not, he observes. Unlike him, she is able to live in the moment, and she has a childlike ability to switch in an instant from seriousness to merriment. It is because of Hermine that Haller learns how to spend time enjoying himself at dances and listening to jazz in night clubs. She helps to end his sense of isolation.

Symbolically, perhaps, Hermine represents the feminine, sensual side of Haller himself (he says that when he looks at her it is like looking in a mirror). She may also represent his homoerotic desires, since she reminds him so much of his former male friend, Herman, and actually dresses as a man at the fancy dress ball. This symbolic dimension may help to explain why Haller kills the image of Hermine in the magic theater; because he has found in himself what she represents, she can no longer appear as a being outside of himself. He is, after all, only fulfilling her wish, amounting to a prediction, that he should eventually kill her.

Maria

Maria is a beautiful young woman who is a friend of Hermine. Like Hermine, Maria is a high-class prostitute, but there is also a kind of innocence about her. At Hermine's suggestion, she takes up with Haller, although she continues to see many other men as well. Haller falls in love with her. He believes that she is the kind of woman who lives only for love. Like Hermine, Maria makes Haller feel at home in the world of dance halls, cinemas, bars, and hotel lounges. She has no formal education, but, again like Hermine, she has the ability to live fully in the moment, in a sensual kind of way, and she knows exactly how to please her lovers. She also shows Haller that her love of the latest American popular songs can be as pure an artistic experience as his more exalted pleasure in classical music.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was one of the greatest composers in the Western musical tradition, famous for the almost heavenly beauty of his music. Haller venerates Mozart and regards his work as an expression of the eternal and the divine. In a surreal episode near the end of the novel, when Haller is in the □magic theater,□ he encounters Mozart and discusses music with him. Mozart reappears after Haller has murdered the image of Hermine and plays some music of Handel through a wireless. His purpose is to show Haller that even though the music is poorly reproduced, its divine quality can still be heard, and so Haller should also appreciate the presence of the divine in all the variegated expressions of human life. It is Mozart who refuses to pronounce the death sentence that Haller believes he deserves for killing Hermine.

Instead, Mozart pronounces that Haller shall live, and by living, he will learn to revere life and also to laugh at it in the same way that the immortals laugh.

Pablo

Pablo is a saxophone player in a jazz band. Of South American or Spanish origin, he is a friend of Hermine and through her comes to know Haller. Pablo says little, but he is charming and seems to live on good terms with everyone. He is an excellent musician but, unlike Haller, sees little point in theoretical discussions about music. In Pablo's view, music should be played, not talked about, and he loves to play dance music that gets people moving and makes them happy. Pablo introduces Haller to mind-altering drugs, such as cocaine and opium, and he also suggests at one point that Haller join him and Hermine in a sexual encounter. Haller refuses, but the incident shows that Pablo does not conform to conventional notions of morality. The drugs Pablo gives to Haller enable Haller to enter the □magic theater□ and so connect with his unconscious mind.

The Professor

The professor is a former acquaintance of Haller. They used to spend time together discussing oriental religion and mythology, which is the professor's specialty. When they meet again by chance in the street, the professor asks Haller to dinner. Haller's assessment of the professor is that his interests and knowledge are too narrow. He envelops himself in his scholarly work and believes in its value because he believes in evolution and progress. But he knows nothing of how the work of Einstein has changed the foundations of thought, because he thinks Einstein's work only concerns mathematicians. The professor is also a conventional, unthinking patriot who does not see that the militarism he supports will lead inevitably to the next war.

Themes

The Search for a Higher State of Consciousness

In a note to the novel written in 1961, Hesse declared that many readers had failed to understand the message of *Steppenwolf*. The book was not only about Haller's many miseries and failings. It pointed also to a □second, higher, indestructible world beyond the Steppenwolf . . . a positive, serene, superpersonal and timeless world of faith□ (published as the □Author's Note□ in the English translation of *Steppenwolf*). Hesse emphasized that the book was not about despair but belief.

This timeless world is glimpsed on a number of occasions by Haller. Since he is an extremely cultured, refined man, his knowledge and appreciation of the arts has given him moments of serene contemplation in which he is elevated into an eternal realm of the spirit, far above the messy push-and-pull of human life. He describes such moments early in the section of the novel entitled □Harry Haller's Records.□ One of them came when he attended a concert. Listening to piano music, he was entranced, and a door opened to □another world,□ in which he □sped through heaven and saw God at work.□ It was a moment of complete acceptance, knowledge, and love in which he was able to contemplate all his human experiences in the light of eternity. The experience only lasted about fifteen minutes, but it gave him solace every time he thought about it in the many desolate days that followed. Sometimes he could for a moment see this other world clearly □threading my life like a divine and golden track.□ It came to him again in moments of spontaneous poetic inspiration or in reading poetry or contemplating a philosophical thought. At such moments, he felt complete and whole, and his heart was open to the truth of life, like a lover. Haller associates this world with the music of Mozart and Bach and the poetic world of Goethe. He refers to it as the realm of the immortals who live □in timeless space, enraptured, refashioned and immersed in a crystalline eternity like ether, and the cool starry brightness and radiant serenity of this world outside the earth.□ Hermine, in her capacity as another aspect of Haller's own mind, calls it the □kingdom of truth . . . the kingdom on the other side of time and appearances. It is there we belong. There is our home. It is that which our heart strives for.□ But Haller is bitterly aware of how hard it is to find this divine spark even for a moment in the humdrum human world. His abiding problem is how to achieve a higher state of consciousness, how to become one of the immortals, when he is confronted at every turn by the mediocrity of the bourgeois society in which he lives, its cultural decline, its obsession with the trivial and the degraded, with war and mechanization that debase the human spirit. Having once glimpsed this transcendental reality, he cannot forget it, and it is this that sets him apart from the rest of society: the man who sees the highest truth, however fleetingly, is doomed to be an outsider in a society that does not recognize its existence. At the end of the novel, it cannot be said that Haller has been successful in his quest to experience the divine level of life, but he is in a better position than he was at the beginning. He has been through the necessary processes of psychological healing (thanks to Pablo's □magic theater□), and with his new knowledge, he feels optimistic that the realm of the immortals is not beyond his grasp.

The Need for Psychological Wholeness

A precondition for attaining the highest spiritual perception, the novel seems to imply, is the need for Haller to repair his own psychological condition. He must first learn to experience the fullness of his own being. At the beginning of the novel, Haller, for all his intellectual power and refinement, is a psychologically maladjusted man. He is a misfit, at odds with the society in which he lives, rigid in his ways, tormented by what he sees as his dual personality, the □wolf□ element in him□his desire to be independent, uncompromising, strong□always fighting with the human element that might otherwise be more sociable and agreeable, but is also cowardly and stupid. This psychologically crippled man, full of self-hatred, comes close to committing suicide since his life has become a □waste and empty hell of lovelessness and despair.□ He fails because he has been unable to live according to the truth of his own being. He has created a prison for himself by narrowing and limiting his concept of who he is. He thinks that the dual personality with which he so strongly identifies is fixed and immutable, not realizing that he is repressing a myriad of other selves, each of which in reality has a claim on him. □Harry consists of a hundred or a thousand selves,□ writes the author of the □Treatise on the Steppenwolf,□ according to whom the idea of a stable, unified personality is an illusion. In the treatise, Haller is compared to a gardener who cultivates a garden of a thousand flowers but then divides them into only two categories, edible and inedible. Since this is too crude a distinction, he misses nine-tenths of the beauty and value of the garden. According to the treatise, □This is what the Steppenwolf does with the thousand flowers of his soul. What does not stand classified as either man or wolf he does not see at all.□

Since Haller represses so much of himself, and since the thrust of the psyche (according to the psychologist Carl Jung) is to wholeness and inclusion, he is fighting against the tide of life. At the most basic level, in his austere intellectual detachment, Haller has repressed his need for love and sex and his need to mix with others and enjoy himself socially. He must learn to be less stuffy, judgmental, and snobbish, to appreciate life in all its manifestations, both inner and outer. For this purpose, his new friends Hermine, Maria, and Pablo serve him well, opening him up to a new world of experience. The magic theater that Pablo encourages him to enter is □for madmen only□; that is to say, it is for those who are able to let go of the powerful grip of the rational mind and experience their unconscious desires and motivations. In particular, Haller is able to recover his erotic self through meeting once more the girls and women he has known in the past, but this time with more successful outcomes: □All the love that I had missed in my life bloomed magically in my garden during this hour of dreams.□ He learns that the personality is not fixed and rigid but contains a thousand different elements that can be moved around and recombined in different ways like so many pieces of a chessboard. This thinking frees him from the man/wolf dichotomy that has previously dominated and limited his awareness and makes him ready at least to attempt to experience the divine even within the hurly-burly of the human world.

Style

Realism and Surrealism

The novel is told on two levels, the realistic and the surreal. The bourgeois narrator's preface and the first part of "Harry Haller's Records" gives the reader a realistic picture of Haller's life. But when Haller is given the book, "*Treatise on the Steppenwolf*," a surreal element enters the novel, since from a realistic point of view, it is impossible for Haller suddenly to acquire a book written in this expository style which analyzes his own personality. Haller's dream of Goethe and his encounter with Mozart are other surreal events, as is the entire episode of the magic theater.

In Haller's encounter with Hermine, the realistic and the surreal levels are intertwined (although symbolic rather than surreal might be a better term in this context). At one level, Hermine is a shrewd courtesan who knows how to handle a new client; at another level, she is an incarnation of an aspect of Haller's own mind: she understands him perfectly, knows everything about him, and can read his thoughts, and he believes he can never have a secret from her.

Music Imagery

Music is a recurring motif, and different types of music illustrate the dichotomy between the ideal realm of the immortals and the bourgeois world; between spirit and flesh. In Haller's view, the music of composers such as Handel, Bach, and Mozart can express the divine and the eternal. By contrast, popular music, especially jazz, represents for Haller only cultural degeneration. In spite of this view, however, he acknowledges that jazz, even though he detests it, has "a secret charm" for him; its "raw and savage gaiety reached an underworld of instinct and breathed a simple honest sensuality." He also appreciates the happiness such music can convey. After he meets Maria, he comes to acknowledge that for those who enjoy the popular music of the day, it may provide them with an aesthetic experience that is just as valid and as profound as that provided by Mozart or other composers. This possibility suggests the bridging of the gap between spirit (represented by classical music) and flesh (jazz) that is part of the overall theme of the novel.

Mirror Imagery

The image of the mirror is used repeatedly to illustrate the point that the Steppenwolf must look at and examine himself unflinchingly in order to understand all aspects of his own nature. The mirror image occurs in the "*Treatise on the Steppenwolf*," for example, which states that Haller is well aware of the existence of such a mirror, as well as his need to look into it and his own terrible fear of doing so. The image of the mirror is used in connection with Hermine to convey the idea that she is an aspect of Haller's own self. When he looks into her face, it appears as "a magic mirror" to him. Near the

end of the novel, Pablo shows Haller two mirrors, one in which Haller sees his accustomed wolf/man nature and which Pablo throws away before showing Haller another large mirror on the wall. In that mirror, Haller finally sees himself in a multitude of different guises. The mirror reveals to him the almost infinite facets and possibilities of his own self.

Historical Context

The Weimar Republic

In an attempt to create a parliamentary democracy in 1919 following World War I, German social democrats established the Weimar Republic in Germany. However, the Weimar Republic was beset by difficulties from the beginning. These included German resentment of the Versailles Treaty that followed World War I, which imposed punitive conditions on Germany in an attempt to ensure it would not threaten the victorious European powers again. Economic problems of Weimer included runaway inflation in the early 1920s and high unemployment during the worldwide depression in the early 1930s. Economic distress and social unrest combined to undermine the fledgling republic, which ended in 1933 with the establishment of the Third Reich by Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party.

Significant issues in the literature of the Weimar Republic were the role of technology in society, nationalism, communism, and the cultural influence of the United States, among other countries. These were discussed by such figures as Thomas Mann (1875-1955), the greatest writer and intellectual of the Weimer Republic, who warned, along with others, against the dangers of fascism and authoritarianism. In *Steppenwolf*, Hesse made contributions to several of these issues. (Although during this period, Hesse lived in Switzerland, not Germany, he remained a German writer read by Germans.) Hesse's dislike of mechanization and technology can be seen in the surrealistic war on the automobiles and in Haller's negative comments about the radio and the gramophone. Equally prominent is Hesse's hatred of the kind of anti-democratic nationalism advocated by conservative forces in Weimar, as can be seen in the episode of Haller's dinner with the professor. Hesse's dislike of the cultural influence of the United States can be seen in Haller's contempt for jazz and American popular songs. In general, however, Hesse's novels during the period of the Weimar Republic were not political in tone. *Damien* (1919), *Siddhartha* (1922) and *Steppenwolf* (1927) are concerned mostly with the development of an enlightened personal vision; their interest is in psychology, spirituality, and the individual rather than society.

Psychological Theories of Freud and Jung

In the 1920s, the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) were well known and widely accepted as groundbreaking contributions to human knowledge. In his studies of neurotic patients, Freud subjected the unconscious mind to rigorous investigation and showed how it influenced behavior. He believed that when people go through experiences that are too painful or threatening, they repress the memories of such experiences in the unconscious, where the memories become inaccessible to the conscious mind. Much of Freud's work dealt with repressed sexuality and aggression. He believed that dreams are the gateway to the unconscious mind and that by analyzing dreams the subconscious thoughts that affected behavior could be brought to

the surface and the neurosis cured. One of Freud's most important works was *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

Hesse was a great admirer of Freud's work, and one of the key episodes in *Steppenwolf* is Haller's dream in which he meets Goethe. Before Goethe appears, Haller notices a scorpion climbing up his leg. He is aware that a scorpion can be □dangerously and beautifully emblematic of woman and sin.□ The image returns at the end of the dream, when Goethe presents Haller with a tiny effigy of a woman's leg. Haller falls in love with it, but when he reaches out to touch it, he fears it may be the scorpion, and he refers to his □hectic struggle between desire and dread.□ This incident suggests that sexual repression may play a part in fueling Haller's neurotic personality. The fact that Haller becomes much happier when he indulges in a sexual relationship with Maria seems to confirm this interpretation.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was originally one of Freud's collaborators, but he broke with Freud in 1913 and developed his own system, which he called analytical psychology. Jung developed concepts such as archetypes, which he defined as recurring symbolic patterns in the mind, found in dreams as well as the mythologies of the world. Jung believed in the existence of a collective unconscious, not merely an individual one, in which these images were stored.

Hesse underwent Jungian psychoanalysis a decade before writing *Steppenwolf*. He later met and corresponded with Jung. Scholars usually identify Hesse's novel *Damien* as the one that shows the greatest influence of Jung, but there are elements of Jungian theory in *Steppenwolf*, too. One of the terms Jung used is the □shadow,□ the socially unacceptable aspects of the personality that are rejected by the conscious mind and pushed into the unconscious. This is close to what Hesse identifies in Haller as the wolf element within him. Jung also identified what he called the anima, the feminine element within a man, and this corresponds to the character Hermine in the novel.

Critical Overview

On first publication, *Steppenwolf* was praised highly by German writer Thomas Mann and was a bestseller in Germany in 1927, but in spite of that, the novel met some fierce criticism. Some readers saw in the prominence of sex and sensuality of this novel a betrayal of the asceticism and spirituality of Hesse's previous novel, *Siddhartha*. Hesse received many indignant letters from readers complaining about the novel's unusual form as well as the perceived immorality of its treatment of sex and its apparent endorsement of drug-taking. Hesse was also accused of being unpatriotic.

In England, the novel received a rather wary reaction from the reviewer for *The Guardian* newspaper, who objected to the □macabre□ quality of the work and suggested □that post-war Germany is becoming rather too morbidly preoccupied with the intellectual insanity, which, according to Herr Hermann Hesse, overtakes human life when 'two ages, two cultures and religions, overlap.'□ The reviewer's conclusion is:

The author is at his best when his hero's thwarted idealism breaks into the foreground; for there is something malevolently Shavian about his forthrightness, and his bitter commentary on European civilisation is one of the few sane features of a maniacal book.

In the United States, *Steppenwolf* achieved far greater success than it did in Germany, although that success was over thirty years in coming. Beginning with the Beat Generation of the late-1950s, Hesse became something of a cult figure, and the Steppenwolf, as an outsider who opposed the materialist culture of his time, became a kind of hero. The popularity of the novel increased during the counterculture of the 1960s. The hippie culture of the young saw in *Steppenwolf* a guide and a philosophical justification for their experiments in hallucinogenic drugs and their opposition to the Vietnam War, which they viewed as an example of American greed and imperialism. The novel's status was such that a prominent rock band named itself after the title, and even in the early 2000s, there are several theater companies named Steppenwolf, in honor of the □magic theater□ of the novel.

Although Hesse's popularity in the United States waned during the 1970s, *Steppenwolf* remained highly esteemed by literary critics, some of whom regard the novel as Hesse's greatest achievement in the genre. Its form has been compared to that of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and it has been interpreted in the light of the psychoanalytic theories of Carl Jung.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth century literature. In this essay, he analyzes the role played by Pablo in Steppenwolf.

In the transformation of the Steppenwolf from an aloof, troubled intellectual to a person who engages wholeheartedly in all that life has to offer, a key figure is the saxophone player, Pablo. Haller meets him through Hermine at the Balance Hotel where Haller first dances in public with her. Pablo plays in the orchestra. He is young, dark, and good-looking, and his origins are either Spain or South America. He is clearly very different from the middle-aged, undistinguished-looking, northern European Haller. Hermine thinks very highly of Pablo and informs Haller that he is able to play every instrument there is and speak every language in the world. Haller, however, does not take to Pablo when he first meets him. He finds the musician agreeable and charming, but he is a little jealous of Pablo's friendship with Hermine. At this point, Haller does not feel at all comfortable in this dance hall environment, which he regards as a □world of idlers and pleasure seekers.□

For some while, Haller continues to be unimpressed and indeed puzzled by Pablo. Haller is an intellectual whose currency is language. He deals in ideas, in intellectual theories, and scholarly knowledge, but Pablo is the opposite. He says almost nothing, no more than one word at a time, such as please or thank you. He gives Haller the impression that he does not think much, either. When Haller tries to talk to him about music, Pablo just smiles, and Haller takes this to mean that Pablo is unaware of any music other than jazz. Faced with this kind of vacuity, Haller assumes that Pablo lives only for playing the saxophone, in addition to being something of a dandy and a ladies' man. This is definitely not someone whom a man like Haller is going to take seriously. To the Steppenwolf, Pablo is like a child, □for whom there are no problems, whose joy it is to dribble into his toy trumpet and who is kept quiet with praises and chocolate,□ although he does learn from Hermine that Pablo is an expert in all kinds of drugs that will ease pain, aid sleep, and □[beget] beautiful dreams, lively spirits and the passion of love.□

When Pablo finally does start responding verbally to Haller, he explains that he is a musician, not a professor. Whereas Haller's refined appreciation of music is gained by listening rather than playing, for Pablo, the purpose of music is to play it, not talk about it. He could, he says, make clever remarks about the music of Bach and Mozart, since he knows all their works□thus disproving Haller's notion that Pablo only knows jazz□but there would be no point in doing so. When Haller tries to convince him that Mozart's music is superior to the latest foxtrot, Pablo will not get drawn into an argument. He does not divide music into different layers, one eternal and the other ephemeral, the way Haller does. As a musician, he plays whatever is in demand, and he plays it as well as he possibly can since he loves to give people pleasure.

This conversation is a telling one. Whereas Haller, despite the progress he is making, continues to be dominated by his intellect, which separates life into the dualities of

spirituality/sensuality, man/Steppenwolf, classical music/jazz, high culture/low culture, Pablo makes no such distinctions. He has a more unified personality. As an enthusiastic participant in the sensual dance of life, he lives in the fullness of the moment. He does not make up theories about life or music; he is too busy living it.

When Haller takes up with Maria, he begins to see a lot more of Pablo, since Pablo and Maria are friends and also at some point have been lovers. During this time, Pablo sometimes gives Haller opium and cocaine, and they become friends. Haller's opinion of Pablo begins to change, although he still feels that he does not understand the younger man. He is shocked on one occasion when Pablo proposes that Haller and Maria join him in a □love orgy for three.□ Haller refuses abruptly. Some days later, Hermine remarks that Pablo may be a saint in hiding, since sometimes even sin and vice can be a way to saintliness. She is suggesting that Pablo is a spiritual seeker and that conventional notions of sin and vice may, in fact, be mere labels that bourgeois society places on behavior that contravenes its narrow moral standards.

What transpires as the novel progresses is that Pablo is indeed a kind of guru figure, a spiritual guide to Haller. Hesse drops a clue to this just after Pablo is introduced to the story. After meeting Haller, Pablo realizes immediately that he is a very unhappy man and tells Hermine that she must be nice to him. Pablo says, □Look at his eyes. Doesn't know how to laugh.□ The remark is meant literally, but it also has a deeper significance. Throughout *Steppenwolf* laughter is associated with the realm of the immortals. In Haller's dream of Goethe, for example, the revered old poet tells him that the immortals do not take things seriously. They like joking, and Haller hears him □[laughing] a still and soundless laughter.□ Later, in a moment of contemplation, Haller suddenly understands the full significance of this immortal laughter:

It was a laughter without an object. It was simply light and lucidity. It was that which is left over when a true man has passed through all the sufferings, vices, mistakes, passions and misunderstandings of men and got through to eternity and the world of space. And eternity was nothing else than the redemption of time, its return to innocence, so to say, and its transformation again into space.

In this moment of understanding, Haller hears the laughter of the immortals, □a never-ending and superhuman serenity, an eternal, divine laughter.□ Laughter, it appears, is simply a metaphor for a mode of being in which there is no longer any attachment to the pleasures and pains of the world, only a timeless joy that is the essence of life, beyond any possibility of suffering.

When Pablo says Haller does not know how to laugh, he implies that Haller has no knowledge or understanding of this higher mode of being, a knowledge that Pablo himself possesses. Later, Haller will notice that there is always laughter in Pablo's eyes, and his actual laugh is □bright and peculiar□; it reminds Haller of the □strange and eerie laughter□ that he associates with the immortals. It is Pablo who can show Haller the way.

Hesse has another surprise for the reader in connection with Pablo, although it will be no surprise to anyone who has been noting the layered nature of the narrative, which is at once realistic and symbolic. Pablo is in truth nothing more than an aspect□a long neglected aspect□of Haller's own mind. This becomes crystal clear towards the end of the novel when Pablo begins to prepare Haller and Hermine for the magic theater. □Why was Pablo talking so much?□ Haller wonders. □Was it not I who made him talk, spoke, indeed, with his voice? Was it not, too, my own soul that contemplated me out of his black eyes . . . ?□

Pablo represents that part of Haller's own mind that he has pushed out of his conscious awareness and into the unconscious. As Pablo calls that forgotten psychic energy awake, the impulses that Haller has repressed are unleashed. The fact that Haller is beginning to realize this shows how far he has come from the time when he believed that he and Pablo were complete opposites with nothing at all in common. In a sense, of course, he was right, since Pablo represents everything within himself that Haller had tried so hard to deny. But he now realizes that, in the end, denying one's own nature is a lot harder than acknowledging it. The integrated self that emerges from such acknowledgement is just as Jung described it, a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a coexistence of opposites. One example of this concept occurs when Haller looks into the large mirror on the wall and sees a multitude of reflections of himself, all showing different characteristics, such as young and old, serious and comic, civilized and wild. One of these figures is an elegant young man who □leaped laughing into Pablo's arms and embraced him and they went off together.□ This is an allusion to the earlier incident in which Haller is repelled by Pablo's suggestion of a sexual encounter involving Pablo, Haller, and Maria. It suggests Haller's acceptance of his latent bisexuality, a motif that also occurs in his relationship with Hermine, who looks like a boy and who reminds Haller of his boyhood friend, Herman.

Pablo also functions as a teacher after Haller has □killed□ Hermine. This incident of the killing has been variously interpreted. It may mean that Haller has recognized the feminine aspect of himself, and his destruction of the external Hermine means that he has reintegrated that self into his conscious awareness. But this interpretation is hard to reconcile with the negative terms, full of guilt and transgression, in which the incident is presented. An alternative explanation is what Pablo himself suggests, that Haller kills Hermine in a fit of jealousy. If this is so, it demonstrates that Haller has not yet fully learned what Pablo is trying to teach him, as Pablo himself points out. Haller has sunk back into a state in which he not only recoils from sensuality but also gets caught up in an ego-centered frame of mind, desperately needing to have exclusive control and ownership over the things to which he is attached in life. Then when he comes to his senses, he wallows in guilt, remorse, and the perceived need for retribution. Such is the human game as it is so commonly played, but Haller is being encouraged to play it differently. He gets some assistance from the sudden appearance of Mozart, who with the help of the Handel-on-the-wireless analogy□the quality of the reproduction may be dreadful but the music it plays remains divine□grasps that life lived in the sphere of time is an expression, however distorted and disguised, of the qualities which he identifies as divine and which are summed up in that phrase, □divine laughter.□ It is not for Haller to criticize it or attempt to amend it; it is not for Haller to rail against the distortions of the

ideal in the appearances of everyday life. Life is what it is. Mozart tells him that rather than tampering with it, □Better learn to listen first! Learn what is to be taken seriously and laugh at the rest.□

When Mozart turns out to have been Pablo all along, Hesse springs his final surprise on the reader. Since Pablo and the wisdom he embodies is an aspect of Haller's own mind, then the same must be true of Mozart/Pablo. That ripple of divine laughter that appears to Haller as the eternal song emanating from some other, superior world inhabited by Mozart and the immortals is in fact no such thing. It is the voice of his own □higher□ self, calling from within. All he has to do is listen.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Steppenwolf*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Adaptations

Steppenwolf was made into a film in 1974, written and directed by Fred Haines, starring Max von Sydow as Harry Haller and Dominique Sanda as Hermine. As of 2006, the film was in print and available for purchase in VHS format from Amazon.com and other Internet vendors.

Topics for Further Study

Research the counterculture of the 1960s in the United States and make a class presentation that explains why *Steppenwolf* had such a strong appeal for young Americans during that decade.

Read Hesse's novel, *Siddhartha*. Write an essay in which you discuss how Siddhartha's inner journey compares to that of Harry Haller. Are their spiritual quests similar? Do they reach the same kind of enlightenment? How do their methods differ? In what way is Vasudeva's instruction to Siddhartha to listen to the river similar to Mozart's instruction to Haller at the end of the novel that he must first learn to listen?

Haller has a deep suspicion of technology and fears that it will debase the culture and adversely affect the human spirit. Why does he feel this? What reasons does he give? To what extent have his fears been realized? What are some of the dangers associated with technology that have become manifested in the years since *Steppenwolf* was first published? Make a class presentation with the results of your research.

Harry Haller divides himself into two opposing qualities but later discovers how inadequate such a binary classification is. Write a short analysis like the □Treatise on the Steppenwolf□ in which, taking yourself or someone you know well as your subject, you divide the whole personality into what you see as two main conflicting characteristics. Then show why these two characteristics are inadequate to describe a person's full nature. Is the treatise correct when it implies that every human being has a thousand different selves? What are the implications of that for the development of the personality?

Compare and Contrast

1920s: Many in Europe are convinced that it is only a matter of time before another war breaks out on the continent. The prospect of war is connected to the fact that Germany resents the harsh conditions imposed on it in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Today: Having endured two major wars in the twentieth century, Europe is now involved in a network of economic and political relationships within the European Union that make a war between the principal powers of France, Britain, and Germany unlikely.

1920s: In 1920, there are 7.5 million cars and trucks in the United States. The rise of the automobile industry in the United States and Europe leads to the development of infrastructure (new roads) and the decline of other modes of transportation such as horse-drawn vehicles, bicycles, streetcars, and interurban trains. Cars change everyday life for millions. Travel becomes easier and more convenient, increasing personal freedom and mobility. The growth of technology also leads some to fear the increasing mechanization of society and human subservience to machines, an attitude that Hesse dramatizes in the □war on the automobiles□ section in *Steppenwolf*.

Today: There are 220 million cars in the United States and 500 million cars worldwide. Cars are the main source of transportation in most developed countries. Rising gasoline prices and awareness of environmental pollution caused by the automobile lead to the development of hybrid vehicles that use electric power in addition to gasoline. Some of these cars yield as much as seventy miles to the gallon in freeway driving.

1920s: Jazz, a form of music imported from the United States, becomes extremely popular in Germany. During the Weimar Republic, jazz becomes almost the national music, heard in cafés, dance halls, films and on gramophone records. American jazz musicians tour German cities.

Today: Germany today remains strongly influenced by American culture, including jazz, television, and movies. Over 85 percent of movies playing in German cinemas are made in Hollywood. After Japan, Germany is the biggest foreign market for American films.

What Do I Read Next?

Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* (first published in 1922) is the story of a young Indian man who seeks the path of spiritual knowledge and salvation. Modeled on the early life of the Buddha, the novel combines timeless Eastern wisdom about the ultimate reality of life with Hesse's distinctly original metaphysical and spiritual vision.

Hesse's novella *Klingsor's Last Summer* (1920; first English translation, 1970) is about the last months in the life of an intense and passionate middle-aged painter called Klingsor. Like *Steppenwolf*, the novella has autobiographical elements and makes extensive use of the mirror motif. Also, just as Harry Haller gazes into the mirror before he enters the magic theater and sees all aspects of himself, so Klingsor expresses through his final self-portrait the entirety of his multi-faceted self.

Man and His Symbols (1964) is a clear introduction, with many illustrations, to the theories of Carl Jung. It includes essays by Jung and other Jungian scholars, including Joseph L. Henderson, M.-L. von Franz, Aniela Jaffé, and Jolande Jacobi. The book explains Jungian concepts important for Hesse, such as the shadow, the anima and the animus, and the significance of dreams.

Ralph Freedman's *Hermann Hesse, Pilgrim of Crisis: A Biography* (1978) is, as of 2006, the most thorough biography of Hesse available in English, especially strong on the autobiographical elements in *Steppenwolf*. In Freedman's view, Hesse resembles a character in one of his novels who eventually learns to reconcile his ideal of harmony with life on earth. He is able to live through crises while at the same time contemplating them in a detached manner.

Further Study

Boulby, Mark, *Hermann Hesse: His Mind and Art*, Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 159-205.

As of 2006, this was one of the most detailed readings available. Boulby discusses such topics as the significance of music for the novel's structure and theme; he views the novel as an optimistic one in which faith imposes order on chaos.

Mileck, Joseph, *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art*, University of California Press, 1978, pp. 174-97.

Mileck discusses such topics as the autobiographical elements in *Steppenwolf*. He doubts that Hesse himself took hallucinogenic drugs, even though Haller in the novel uses them to achieve self-knowledge.

Sorrell, Walter, *Hermann Hesse: The Man Who Sought and Found Himself*, Owald Wolff, 1974, pp. 83-93.

This is a concise overview of Hesse's life and work. Most interesting for an understanding of *Steppenwolf* is the chapter on Hesse's ironic brand of humor.

Tusken, Lewis W., *Understanding Hermann Hesse: The Man, His Myth, His Metaphor*, University of South Carolina, 1998, pp. 108-27.

Tusken gives a reading of *Steppenwolf* in mostly Jungian terms. The novel is an attempt to construct a literary metaphor for the Jungian concept of individuation, the development of all aspects of a person's individuality.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Novels for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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