The Stone Boy Study Guide

The Stone Boy by Gina Berriault

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Introduction

First published in*Mademoiselle* in 1957, Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" catapulted its author to national fame after it was made into a movie in 1984. Even before this widespread recognition, "The Stone Boy"—which was included in the author's first collection of short stories, *The Mistress, and Other Stories* (1965)—had helped to solidify Berriault's reputation as a writer concerned with the serious issues of the human condition. Despite acclaim from prominent reviewers as well as other American writers such as Andre Dubus, who called Berriault "a splendid and unheralded writer," Berriault has not won the attention of a wide body of readers. Molly McQuade expressed regret in the *Chicago Tribune Book World* that Berriault's work "has not met with a splashy success or even with the sustained and sustaining respect that it deserves."

Readers who do take note of "The Stone Boy," however, are rewarded with an accomplished yet compact story filled with complex human emotions and relationships. Set on a small family farm, "The Stone Boy" tells the story of nine-year-old Arnold who accidentally and fatally shoots his older brother. When Arnold does not respond to this event emotionally, his family assumes that he must be some sort of "monster." As the story unfolds, Arnold, thus isolated from those who are closest to him, turns himself into the image that his family now holds of him. The story demonstrates the immeasurable, almost insurmountable, effect that other people's opinions have on the self-perception of people, especially younger people. It also raises socially important questions about how and why children develop into the adults they become.

Author Biography

Berriault was born on New Year's Day in 1926 in Long Beach, California, to a Russian Jewish immigrant couple. Berriault's father worked as a marble cutter and later as a writer, but he was not able to find steady work, and the family lived under precarious financial circumstances. Berriault's mother lost her sight while Berriault was a teenager, which Berriault later said influenced her writing. Berriault has spent much of her life in California, the setting for many of her works of fiction.

As a child, Berriault was an avid reader, a selfdescribed "restless spirit" who felt "confined in a classroom and yearning to be out and roaming, either in the landscape or in her own imagination." Reading satisfied this restlessness, and she began to write original stories on her father's old typewriter when she was in elementary school. She also found herself drawn to drama and art. Although one of her high school teachers offered her the opportunity to attend drama school for free, after her father's death, Berriault made the decision to forgo her schooling to help support her family, working as a clerk, waitress, and reporter.

Berriault continued to write in her spare time, and she first came to the notice of critics in 1958, when seven of her stories were collected in a volume called *Short Story*. Berriault then won a writer's fellowship from the Centro Mexicano de Escritos in Mexico City, Mexico, and she moved there in 1963. Three years later, she received an appointment as a scholar at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study. Throughout the 1960s, Berriault supported herself through these academic appointments as well as by writing articles for *Esquire* magazine. Berriault has also taught creative writing at San Francisco State University and Ohio University.

Throughout her career, Berriault has produced three collections of short stories, four novels, and a screenplay adapted from "The Stone Boy." Despite her lengthy and successful career, Berriault has led a very private life. She claims to make the acquaintance of no critics, is not a member of any writing societies, and refuses to share any anecdotes about her life. Her work, however, has drawn her into public view, particularly after *Women in Their Beds*, published in 1996, won the Book Critics Circle Award for fiction and the PEN/Faulkner Award the following year.

Plot Summary

One morning nine-year-old Arnold wakes up early in order to go pick peas in the garden with his older brother Eugie. Despite the ring of the alarm clock, Eugie continues to sleep, and Arnold feels uncomfortable, as if he—fully awake and dressed—is placed unexpectedly in the superior position. Arnold wakes his brother and goes downstairs. He takes his rifle from the rack with the expectation of going duck shooting. Eugie comes downstairs, too, reminds Arnold that it isn't duck season. Then the two boys leave the house.

They come to the wire fence that divides the fields from the lake. Eugie passes through the fence first. As Arnold goes between the wires, his gun catches. He jerks at it to free it, and it fires. Arnold feels foolish, expecting his brother to make fun of him for this mistake. Instead, he finds his brother lying on the ground. Arnold sees a spot of blood at the back of his neck. After trying unsuccessfully to rouse Eugie, Arnold sets to work picking peas.

When the sun has fully risen, Arnold returns to the house, where his mother, father, and sister are all up and going about their day. He tells them that Eugie is dead. At first they don't believe him, but they go down to the lake and find the body. While family and the undertaker gather at the house, Arnold retreats to the barn.

Later that day, Arnold goes with his father and his Uncle Andy into town, to the sheriff's office. The sheriff questions the boy. He wants to know if the two brothers got along well, and Arnold's father says he believe they did. Then he wants to know why Arnold did not report the shooting immediately, but Arnold has no answer. Finally, the sheriff concludes that Arnold is either stupid or a boy with no feelings, but he believes in the latter. The sheriff sends the family home. Arnold realizes that his uncle concurs with the sheriff's assessment of him: he is a cruel boy who cared nothing for his brother.

After a silent supper, the family's neighbors come to visit. In order to not attract attention to himself, Arnold remains in the room with the men, listening to them tell stories about Eugie. Uncle Andy shares the sheriff's words with the men, and they talk about Arnold as if he wasn not even there. After all the men have left, Arnold goes to bed, feeling nothing, not even grief.

Arnold wakens later that night. He goes to his parents' room, wanting his mother to hold him while he tells her about the terror he felt as he knelt alongside Eugie. When he knocks on the door, however, his mother turns him away. She asks, "Is night when you get afraid?" Arnold is shocked. He also suddenly realizes he is naked and feels ashamed.

The next morning at breakfast, Arnold's sister attempts to ignore him, but their father makes clear that such behavior will not be tolerated. Arnold understands that his parents are acknowledging his existence. But he has already taken the sheriff's words to heart. When his mother asks why he knocked on the door last night, he merely

answers, "I didn't want nothing." He goes out of the house to get a lost calf, scared at his own words.

Summary

The Stone Boy begins in the upstairs bedroom of Arnold who is nine-years-old and his older brother Eugene, who is fifteen. Arnold wakes first in the small bed that they share. He is disturbed to realize that while his older brother is still asleep he has an advantage over him as Eugene, being the eldest, is the higher-ranking sibling. He does not like this strange feeling so he bounces on Eugene to wake him up, reminding him that they have to pick peas early in the morning. Eugene easily reverses their positions and playfully pins Arnold.

Arnold goes downstairs and begins to load his rifle. Eugene joins him in the kitchen. Arnold watches Eugene adjust his cap. Everything that Eugene does reminds Arnold that he is the younger of the two. Eugene was the oldest, then their sister, Nora, and finally Arnold, the youngest in the family. The two leave the house, Arnold with his rifle and Eugene with a large tin washtub for the peas.

They make their way past the barn and through the wheat fields. There are a couple wild ducks on the pond. Eugene offers to go after any ducks that Arnold shoots. Eugene climbs through the wire fence followed by Arnold. Arnold's rifle catches on the wire for a moment before he pulls it free. The rifle goes off as he jerks it free from the fence. He waits for Eugene's verbal abuse that should follow his mistake of letting the gun go off and scaring away the ducks but Eugene does not say anything he only falls to the ground. Arnold goes to his side and notices the blood slowly creeping down his brother's neck. Arnold calls his brother's name several times but Eugene does not move. He feels the same strange feeling of dominance that he did earlier when Eugene lay asleep.

Arnold gets up and drags the washtub behind him until he reaches the vines where the peapods grow. He picks peas until the sun comes up. He drags the washtub that he filled with peapods back to the farmhouse. His mother and Nora are preparing breakfast in the kitchen and his father has just returned from working in the barn. Arnold tells them that his brother is dead. His mother takes one look into his eyes and walks out the door. His father and Nora follow.

Arnold goes into the barn and climbs up to the loft to wait. He hears his mother's piercing scream and his father drive off in the car. Arnold thinks that he will stay in the loft forever. Soon he hears the sound of his father's return. Now he hears the voices of his aunt and uncle. Another car arrives, this time he hears voices he does not recognize.

Arnold's father calls him down from the loft. Arnold, his father, and uncle drive nine miles to the nearest town. The three arrive at the courthouse. The sheriff is out of the building so Uncle Andy leaves to fetch him while Arnold waits with his father.

Arnold thinks back to when his father had called him down from the loft. It was then that he told them how the gun had gone off. He had no answer to why he had not run back

to the house right after he realized his brother was dead. He still did not have any answer.

Andy arrives with the sheriff and they all go into the office. The sheriff questions him about the shooting. He asks Arnold how the gun went off and if he had been good friends with his brother. His father confirms that Arnold had admired his brother a great deal. Everyone agrees that the shooting was accidental but no one can understand why Arnold had picked peas before telling his parents about Eugene.

The sheriff believes Arnold is either stupid or cold and unfeeling. He is betting the latter is true and thinks he will see Arnold in his office when he gets older. The three leave the sheriff's office and get back into the car. Arnold sees the looks on the men's faces and knows they believe the sheriff. They think he is a cruel boy.

Arnold and the rest of the family go about their separate farm chores for the rest of the day. That night they eat supper in awkward silence. After dinner people from neighboring farms begin to arrive to pay their respects. Arnold stays and listens to the visitors because he thinks it will convince everyone that he is a good person and not mean. After everyone talks about Eugene the focus turns to Arnold. The group expresses their belief that he is a monster for he had picked peas and he has not even cried.

After the last guest has left Arnold goes upstairs, undresses, and goes to bed. He is awakened by the noise of his father out in the yard. He goes downstairs to talk to his mother. Arnold calls her name and waits for her to call him into her bedroom. He wants to tell her that he was terrified when he saw the blood seeping from his brother. He wants to cry with her over the loss of his brother and her oldest son. Instead she tells him to go back to bed. He is surprised that his mother will not let him into her bedroom to talk.

Breakfast is another silent awkward meal. Nora does not pass him the pitcher of milk and he decides he will not ask for it. Arnold decides he will not ask for anything from his family. His father asks Nora to pass the pitcher and does so himself after she refuses. Arnold feels hopeful that his father has remembered him.

Arnold's father mentions that someone needs to search the mountains for a missing calf. It was a chore that used to be Eugene's responsibility. Arnold leaves the table to go find the calf. His mother asks where he is going and what he had wanted last night. Arnold replies that he had wanted nothing.

Analysis

The introduction, or exposition, of the plot structure of The Stone Boy sets the scene for the short story. The main character is the youngest of three children. The family lives on a working farm. Judging from the fact that the boys share a "narrow" bed the family is likely to be working class and each member of the family is expected to complete their chores. Arnold has admiration for his older brother and feels comfortable with Eugene

as his leader. He feels uncomfortable when Eugene is asleep while Arnold is awake because it gives the allusion that Arnold is superior to his older brother. It is odd that a nine-year-old would feel this about his brother and does not seem to make sense in the context of them waking up before heading out to do their chores. The very fact that Arnold's feeling seems out of place tells the reader that it may reappear later in the story. Arnold's discomfort at seeing his brother in a vulnerable position symbolizes his comfort with Eugene's superiority as the older brother.

The author takes time to explain Arnold's rifle, when he got it, what kind it was, and where the bullets are located. The attention to the rifle foreshadows the probability that it will be important to the story. Foreshadowing is an element of the plot.

As the brothers walk through the fields and past the pond toward the garden their playful banter illustrates the brotherly bond they have toward one another. Eugene jokes that Arnold is younger and does not know as much, but he also offers to help his little brother out, as is the case when he offers to fetch any ducks that Arnold shoots.

The rising action of the plot structure occurs when Eugene is shot, and characterized by the fact that one or more characters are in crisis. The reader's suspicion that the rifle will play an important part in the story is confirmed as it accidentally fires and Eugene falls to the ground. At first Arnold does not realize what has happened. He believes Eugene will make fun of him because he had let the gun go off. It is only when he sees the blood coming from his brother does he know what has happened. For the second time that day, Arnold feels a strange uncomfortable feeling of dominance over his older brother. The author's earlier placement of these feelings was an example of plot element foreshadowing. Eugene's death signifies the first appearance of the theme of loss. Arnold has lost his older brother, the one who he had looked up to and whose example he followed.

It is curious that Arnold chose to continue the chore of picking peas after he saw the blood on his brother. The reader is led to believe that perhaps Arnold did not realize his brother was in fact dead as he is only nine-years-old. This hypothesis is quickly dispelled when Arnold announces to his family that Eugene is dead. His mother looked into his eyes and knew in an instant that her son was not lying or playing a trick.

The moment that Arnold's family realize Eugene is dead represents the climax of the story. It is at this point that every character is in crisis. The fact that one son has died at the hand of another son is a turning point in the lives of this family. The fact that Arnold hides in the loft demonstrates that he knows he is in trouble with his family. He even entertains the idea that his family will no longer want anything to do with him. The theme of loss is continued. Eugene's parents have lost a son and Nora has lost her older brother. The family has lost their hope for a future that would include two parents and three siblings. They have lost their hope of future happiness as grief sets in.

No one has any trouble believing the gun had gone off accidentally and Arnold had not wished to shoot his brother. It is accepted among the adults that Arnold had loved and admired his older brother. What is curious among the other characters, as well as to the

reader, is the fact that Arnold had taken the time to pick pea pods instead of immediately telling his parents what had happened. The theme of loss resurfaces as Arnold contemplates the possibility that he has lost not only his brother but the rest of his family too.

The sheriff is the first one to put everyone's fears into words. He believes that Arnold is a cold, unfeeling boy who shows no remorse over killing his brother. At this point the title of the story, *The Stone Boy*, begins to make sense as it refers to a boy made of stone, or one that is hard, and unfeeling. The theme of loss resurfaces through Arnold's loss of innocence. He will no longer be considered a young boy who is full of promise, rather one who is doomed to failure.

Arnold keeps to himself the rest of the day while finishing his chores. When the neighbors arrive to pay their respects he purposely stays so that his actions will not seem out of the ordinary. He believes that by being there he can convince everyone he is the same Arnold and he is not cruel. However, the neighbors are not convinced and openly share their opinion of Arnold. Arnold has lost his chance at the neighbors seeing him as the sweet little boy they once knew. This is another instance of loss, thus continuing the theme of the story. This time after Eugene's death is considered the falling action of the plot structure. The climatic event is over and everyone is trying to resolve the crisis it caused.

Arnold tries to talk to his mother about the event during the night. This is the only time when the reader is clued into any terror or guilt Arnold feels over the death of his brother. He believes he can make it better by telling her he did feel emotion and that he was sorry and terrified over what had happened. He is stricken when his mother refuses to speak to him. He can take the indifference from his uncle and neighbors and even his father but he cannot bear his mother being unwilling to even speak to him. He has been turned away from his family and in turns decides he will turn away from them. Arnold has lost confidence in his mother's forgiveness. The one person he thought he could count on shut him out.

The events at breakfast the morning after Eugene's death mark the denouncement of the plot structure. It is a resolution to the crisis and a return to some sort of normalcy or a marked change in the main character. Arnold has taken up the responsibilities of his brother thus allowing the normal routine to continue on the farm. He has also decided to not reach out to his family and even refuses his mother's attempt at reaching out to him. The opinions of the sheriff and neighbors may have become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as now Arnold is closed off and unemotional. He may indeed become the stone boy but the reader is left to wonder as the story ends there. The theme of loss is complete. Arnold has lost his hope that his place in the family will ever be regained.

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reader is left to wonder as the story ends there. The theme of loss is complete. Arnold has lost his hope that his place in the family will ever be regained.

Characters

Andy Uncle

Andy is the mother's brother. He has a special fondness for Eugie because the boy resembled him. After Eugie's death, Andy immediately embraces the sheriff's interpretation of Arnold: that he is essentially a cold, cruel boy who cares nothing for his brother. It is also Andy who brings up this interpretation in front of the neighbor men who come to visit the family in the evening. He explains the sheriff's idea as if it is an irrefutable fact, helping to cement its validity in Arnold's mind.

Uncle Andy

See Andy

Arnold

Nine-year-old Arnold is the protagonist of the story. Arnold is the youngest child of the family and feels that he is in a subordinate position to his older brother Eugie. Because of this power imbalance, Arnold both looks up to and dislikes Eugie. Arnold's role within the family is not made clear in the story, but clearly he defines himself, his growth, and his actions in terms of Eugie.

After Arnold kills Eugie, he has no one against whom to measure himself any longer. He does not know how to react to his family, and he allows other people—particularly the sheriff and his Uncle Andy—to impose their view of him and his actions on his self-perception. By the end of the story, Arnold has tacitly accepted their judgment and has determined to turn himself into what they see him as. To them, he is a "reasonable" killer, one who is detached from his feelings and the hurt he inflicts on others, and certainly a boy who will only become more detached and more dangerous as time progresses.

Eugene

See Eugie

Eugie

In his brother Arnold's eyes, 15-year-old Eugie is almost a godlike creature, one who possesses beauty, strength, and also the knowledge of his superiority. Part of Arnold's perception of Eugie stems from Eugie being the oldest child and an obvious help on the family farm. Eugie, however, appears to be a normal teenager, self-absorbed and sure

of his power over those who are younger. His last words show that he treats Arnold as many older brothers would treat their younger siblings. For example, Eugie will fetch any ducks they shoot from the lake because, as he tells Arnold, "You'd drown 'fore you got to it, them legs of yours are so puny." At the same time as he degrades Arnold, Eugie also looks out for him and spends time with him.

Father

The boys' father is a taciturn man who shows little reaction to Eugie's death or to the sheriff's assessment of Arnold's character. He does not defend Arnold to the sheriff or to Uncle Andy and even allows his brother-in-law to share the sheriff's beliefs with all their neighbors. The morning after the shooting he attempts to acknowledge Arnold as the boy he is, not the monster he has been dubbed, but by this time Arnold has already accepted the earlier judgment.

Mother

The boys' mother displays an immediate emotional reaction on learning of Eugie's death, but then retreats into her own grief. The day that Eugie dies she ignores Arnold, even "curving her fingers over her eyes so as not to see him." That evening she repels Arnold when he attempts to find solace and share his great terror and sadness about what he has done. This action helps Arnold to accept his new role as a heartless monster, despite his mother's attempts to reach out to him the following morning.

Nora

Nora is the middle child in the family. The morning following Eugie's death, she is the only one who continues to ignore Arnold. Nora's parents, however, clearly demonstrate that such behavior is not to be tolerated.

Sheriff

The sheriff questions Arnold to find out the details of the shooting and to determine if it was an accident or deliberate. He gives only two possible explanations for Arnold's immediate reaction, or lack thereof, to Eugie's death. To the sheriff, Arnold is either stupid or simply feels nothing. He also prophesies a grim future for Arnold, expecting that this "heartless" boy will be involved in, and most likely be the catalyst for, further violence.

Themes

Death

Death is one of the foremost themes in "The Stone Boy." It is expressed literally in Eugie's death, but this accident brings about a series of metaphoric deaths. For Arnold, Eugie's death represents not only the physical loss of his brother but also of his male ideal. Eugie's loss means that Arnold no longer has a role model upon which to base his own life. The death of Eugie means the death of the young man that Arnold would have become.

By the end of the story, Arnold undergoes a metaphoric death of his own. As he realizes that his family has no faith in him and seems only to want to shut him out, he withdraws, not simply from his family, but from humanity in general. In essence, by the end of the story, Arnold has lost his very soul. The theme also can be found in examination of the family itself; by the time the story concludes, the family truly no longer exists. Instead, each member functions apart from the others.

Failure

As a number of critics have pointed out, much of Berriault's fiction centers on how humans fail one another. As Molly McQuade wrote in *Chicago Tribune Book World*, "Every so-called fault deforming a character seems to link up with another fault in someone else, complicating and completing the moral neighborhood they share." In Arnold's eyes, his family has failed him by refusing to forgive his reaction to Eugie's death, however out of place they may feel it to have been. This failure is seen nowhere so clearly as when Arnold's mother turns him away in his moment of need. In refusing to take on crucial parental roles—those of nurturer and teacher—she demonstrates a serious maternal failure. Conversely, in his family's eyes, Arnold has failed in not reacting to Eugie's death in a manner they find appropriate. This failure of the family to experience their grief and pain together will only perpetuate further miscommunication and alienation. Nor is the community guiltless in the tragedy. In accepting Andy's analysis of Arnold's action, which derive from the sheriff—an authority figure who stands outside of the community—the neighboring farmers who form the backbone of the community solidify Arnold's isolation and reinforce the inability of the family members to help one another.

Identity

The theme of identity plays a crucial role in "The Stone Boy." Arnold undergoes a drastic transformationin self-perception and identity based on the opinions of the people around him. At the beginning of the story, Arnold demonstrates his unease at being in any way superior to Eugie, even if this only manifests itself through his ability to wake up earlier than his brother. As the story unfolds, the reason for Arnold's discomfort becomes clear;

he sees and defines himself in comparison to Eugie. Arnold believes Eugie to be the ideal young man— tall, attractive, and fit; in contrast, Arnold is small for his age and has straight hair. He wonders if he will ever become like Eugie. Such a stunted selfimage makes it impossible for Arnold to process these new feelings of superiority.

By the end of the story, Arnold has transformed himself into the "stone boy" referred to in the title. Yet, he does not do so because he feels himself unable to experience emotions and share feelings; he does so because he realizes that this is how his family now views him. Thus Arnold's new identity is not self-imposed but placed upon him by the perceptions of others. Although Arnold accepts this identity, he does not embrace it; in fact, he even fears it. Yet, he is so accustomed to seeing himself through the eyes of others that he makes no effort to negate this identity and carve out a new one, an identity that feels comfortable to him and aptly reflects his interior self. Instead, Arnold will only become what others see in him.

Violence

In "The Stone Boy," Berriault takes a brutal action and renders it, in her writing, in fairly mild terms. She likens Eugie in his death throes to a man climbing, and the only truly discomfiting detail in the scene is Arnold's comparison of Eugie's blood dripping from the bullet hole to a parasite. Despite this depiction, the hint of violence prevails throughout the story, even to the extent that some reviewers believed that Arnold willfully killed his brother; in essence, they have sided with the sheriff, not Arnold.

The theme of violence, however, is far more disquieting in its mere threat. As the sheriff pronounces judgment on Arnold, defining him as a cold-blooded, merciless monster, everyone present feels the chill of his words. The sheriff's next words prophesize a grim future for Arnold. When Uncle Andy wonders that the sheriff does not want to keep Arnold in custody, the sheriff answers, "Not now.... Maybe in a few years." With these sentences, the sheriff foresees for Arnold a continuing future of violent actions against others.

Style

Point of View

"The Stone Boy" is told from a third-person, limited point of view; everything is filtered through Arnold's eyes and senses, and only his thoughts are shared. Readers can understand other characters' feelings only through their words and actions, but are privy to Arnold's innermost feelings. Early in the story, such use of point of view makes clear Arnold's love/hate relationship with his brother. Although Arnold is in awe of his brother, the author uses such terms as *stupidly* and *mocking* to describe Eugie, all of which explain Arnold's complex feelings toward Eugie. After Eugie's death, however, Arnold is so distant from his own emotions that in actuality, the reader learns very little about what Arnold thinks about Eugie's death and his role in it. Arnold does reveal, toward the end of the story, that he felt terror as he knelt beside his brother and that his newly self-imposed separation from his parents scares him deeply.

Setting

Although Berriault's never designates the exact location of "The Stone Boy," the farm setting has a strong bearing on the drama that unfolds. Arnold's family functions within an agricultural community, one that is both isolated and dependent on the other members. Arnold's isolation from his family is reinforced through the farm's physical isolation from neighboring farms. The distance that Arnold and Eugie travel to the lake—down the slope, through the wheat field, and into the marshy pasture—reflects the distance that Arnold will have traveled away from his family by the end of the story. The county seat, Corinth, which is located nine miles from the farm, serves as a central meetingplace for the community and for the action of the story. Corinth is the place where Arnold receives judgement on his actions and where he first comes to accept this pronouncement.

Imagery and Metaphor

The most arresting image in "The Stone Boy" is that of Arnold creeping naked through the house. The story opens with Arnold pulling overalls and a sweater over his unclothed body. At this time, he feels no particular emotion attached to this natural state of undress. On the night of Eugie's death, however, Arnold ventures downstairs to his parents' bedroom, again naked. After he is turned away by his mother, Arnold suddenly becomes aware of his naked body. He feels shame at being in such a state, representing his shame both at wanting his mother and at being rejected by her. He internalizes this shame, realizing the need to protect himself from his parents. Thus he metaphorically clothes himself. He will no longer allow anyone to view him naked, that is, as a person in need of comfort, a person willing to let his guard down and let others see what he is really like.

The most important metaphor of the story is the one implied by the title itself. By the end of the story, Arnold has metaphorically turned into stone. He has become an inhuman creature; no trace of feelings nor any betrayal of emotions will escape from him.

Style

The style of writing employed in "The Stone Boy" is direct and realistic. There is little extraneous description or verbiage for scenes or actions. In addition, all the characters in the story act matter-offactly. Arnold acts straightforwardly in completing the job he set out to accomplish—picking the peas. The family has accepts without question the sheriff's judgment that there is something fundamentally wrong with Arnold. Similarly, Arnold accepts without question the judgment of the sheriff and of his family about his character.

Historical Context

The Decline of the American Farm Family

In the early years of the United States, farming was the main economic activity of Americans. Most farms were self-sufficient and owned by single families who lived on and ran the farm. In 1900 the average family farm was located half a mile away from its nearest neighbor, which served to isolate farm families. However, farm families formed communities by exchanging labor, attending church, and sending their children to schools.

Beginning in the 1920s, however, the number of farms in the United States began to dwindle. In 1930 a little over 30 million Americans lived on farms. In 1950 the farm population had shrunk to around 23 million, and by 1960, only a few years after Berriault wrote "The Stone Boy," only about 15.6 million Americans still lived on farms. The decade also brought many changes to the way farms were run. In 1953 President Dwight Eisenhower cut government subsidies to farms. As well, throughout the decade, automation began to be introduced on farms. While the use of new machinery boosted production, it effectively reduced the labor force, which partially accounts for the drop in farm population. Overall, the number of farm jobs decreased.

The farm population also decreased throughout the 1950s and 1960s as increasing numbers of Americans around the country decided to move to suburbs and planned communities. By 1960, 100 million Americans—one third of the total population—lived in the suburbs. This flight affected many rural farm areas. For instance, in the 1950s, the Midwest, where many of the nation's farms have traditionally been located, experienced lower population gains than many other parts of the country. Life in rural areas often lagged behind urban or suburban life. In 1957 about half of the nation's poor lived in rural areas; these residents suffered from poor nutrition and health care. By 1960 the American farm family's way of life was on the decline and anomalous to most members of society.

Social Conformity and Rebellion

The 1950s saw the rise of the value placed on social conformity. Americans, particularly those who lived in the suburbs, had similar houses, cars, activities, and even life goals. Teenagers were not immune from this conformity, and many observers dubbed middle-class youth the silent generation because they did not protest against societal demands. Some teenagers, however, did question society and even rebel. Rock 'n' roll music became the anthem of teenagers in the 1950s. Many parents disliked rock 'n' roll, believing that it contributed to juvenile delinquency and immorality. Movies of the decade, such as *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Wild One*, portrayed young men who felt frustrated with life in general. They were not angry at any one person or thing but were angry at society. In these movies, the heroes often acted out their antisocial

behavior by skipping school or committing misdemeanors. Skirting on the edge of violence and danger, such movies raised the possibility of bad things happening in what many adults viewed as an orderly world.

The Beatniks

In the mid-1950s, a new artistic movement emerged. The Beatniks, or Beats, were a small group of writers who challenged the social conformity that ran rampant. They cared little for material goods, but instead searched for a higher consciousness. In their work, Beatnik writers raged against middle-class conventions. They created their work free from the impositions of formal structure, plot conventions, and planning—much in the same way they lived their lives. One of the best-known Beat works was Jack Kerouac's On the Road, which was published in 1957, the same year as "The Stone Boy." This novel follows its heroes as they travel around the country, searching for real experiences and values. It celebrates the search for individual identity.

Critical Overview

Although Berriault's career had spanned almost four decades and led to the creation of short stories as well as novels, Berriault's work has never received a great deal of critical attention. Nonetheless, her fiction is generally recognized as powerful, realistic, and unsentimental, often focusing on a crisis situation in which characters are unable to break free from their loneliness and despair. Julia B. Boken, writing in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, compares Berriault's fiction to that of Russian writers Leo Tolstoy, Fyodyor Dostoyevsky, and Anton Chekov because of her "probing [of] the human psyche."

"The Stone Boy" is one of Berriault's better known and frequently anthologized pieces of short fiction. It first appeared in *Mademoiselle* in 1957, and eight years later it was included in Berriault's first collection of short stories, *The Mistress, and Other Stories*. It was also included in Berriault's next published collection, *The Infinite Passion of Expectations: Twenty-Five Stories*, which appeared in 1982. Andre Dubus, himself a noted American short story writer, called this collection "the best book of short stories by a living American author."

Berriault chose to preface *The Mistress, and Other Stories* with a quote from the writer Jose Ortega y Gasset: "Every life is more or less a ruin among whose debris we have to discover what the person ought to have been." The stories in the book echo this sense of desolation. As Dorrie Pagones described Berriault's characters in the *Saturday Review*: "No one behaves as he should, and even supposing anyone did, it is quite clear, as the title of one story puts it, that 'All Attempts Will End in Failure.'"

In discussing young Arnold, his killing of his brother, and his family's reaction to these unfortunate events, many reviewers have evaluated the culpability of the characters, that is, whose life has been ruined and who has failed whom. Pagones saw the parents as having failed their child, and she compares this story to Berriault's "The Bystander," in which the child instead fails the parents. *New York Times* writer Charles Poore, however, saw Arnold's actions as akin to homicide. In his words, "Murder, Miss Berriault shows us, has many forms Two young boys with a rifle, a scene perhaps typical of rural America earlier in the twentieth century. and devices. It is seemingly explicit in "The Stone Boy," where a life ends in a shooting accident. How much of an accident was it? we are left to ask. At that point, the explicit and the implicit merge in shadows."

Other reviewers did not see the incident as so ambiguous and chose instead to focus on other aspects of the story. For instance, Richard Kostelanetz, in the *New York Times Book Review*, remarked that Arnold expressed no feelings of remorse about the death of his brother but feels "considerable embarrassment at being caught naked." Several years after this first round of reviews and criticism, Edith Milton revisited "The Stone Boy" when she discussed *The Infinite Passion of Expectation* for the *New York Times Book Review*. She followed up on Kostelanetz's theme, noting that many of Berriault's characters experience such emotional ambiguity that they find themselves paralyzed, as does Arnold, who becomes numbed.

Overall discussion of Berriault's stories tends to focus on her evaluation and understanding of the human psyche, particularly on the psychological and emotional pain and distance that her characters experience. Some critics, however, have asserted that while Berriault is adept at presenting complex feelings, her writing style sometimes disappoints. They charge that her writing can be too pessimistic, precise, and intellectual. Kostelanetz believed that her "prosaic" and "clumsy" style detracted from her impressive knowledge of human emotions and motivations. For the majority of critics, however, her range of characters, convincing characterization, and understanding of humanity outweighs any stylistic difficulties with her writing. As Boken noted, Berriault's "themes usually focus on the pain that comes from inevitable loss, . . . Through her keen insight, imaginative art, and finely honed craft, Berriault creates a world of flawed people."

Berriault's most recent book of short stories, *Women in Their Beds*, won the 1997 Book Critics Circle Award for fiction and the PEN/Faulkner Award that same year. These awards as well as genuine admiration for Berriault's work have led some contemporary critics to believe that Berriault's short fiction will become increasingly appreciated and influential. As Gary Amdahl stated, Berriault, "having written so beautifully and so consistently for nearly forty years, ought to be as familiar to us as Toni Morrison and John Updike."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Bily teaches English at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. In the following essay, she discusses experiences of grief in "The Stone Boy."

When nine-year-old Arnold realizes that he has accidentally shot his brother Eugene to death in "The Stone Boy," his response seems strange: rather than running back home for help, he continues on to the garden as the brothers had intended to do together, and picks half a tub of peas—his share of the job. Only when he has finished the picking does he return home, and only when his father speaks to him does he tell his parents the awful truth: "Eugie's dead." For the rest of the story, as the people around Arnold try to come to terms with what has happened, the fact of Eugie's death seems less troublesome to them than Arnold's first response. They might come to forgive him for killing his brother—after all, it was an accident—but they cannot forgive him for not appearing sorrier about it.

Arnold realizes, when his father and Uncle Andy ask him about the accident, that it is his own response that is so troubling to the adults. "When they had asked him why he hadn't run back to the house to tell his parents, he had had no answer—all he could say was that he had gone down into the garden to pick the peas. His father had stared at him in a pale, puzzled way, and it was then he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him." That night, when the neighbors come to comfort the family and share memories of Eugie, Arnold sits silently among them, and the men notice and taunt him. "Not a tear in his eye." "He don't give a hoot, is that how it goes?" "If your brother is shot dead, he's shot dead. What's the use of gettin' emotional about it? The thing to do is go down to the garden and pick peas. Am I right?"

Their reaction to Arnold's reaction causes him to question it himself. When he tells the story to the sheriff, this time "it seemed odd now that he had not run back to the house and wakened his father, but he could not remember why he had not." With a child's trust in the adults around him, he accepts their judgment about him. "Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff said, and didn't care about his brother."

But surely the adults, confused by their grief, are wrong about Arnold. Arnold, after all, is only a young boy. The narrator emphasizes his youth in the story's beginning, revealing in the third sentence that "he was nine, six years younger than Eugie," and presenting a striking, peculiar image soon thereafter: as Arnold tries to wake Eugie and the boys wrestle, "all in an instant, he was lying on his back under the covers with only his face showing, like a baby." The age comparisons and the baby image serve to reinforce the boys comparative positions. Arnold is younger, "it was he who was subordinate," and Eugie is older, in command, and literally "on top."

As child psychologists and pediatricians have pointed out in recent decades, children manage grief in their own predictable ways. Penelope Leach, for example, in *Your Growing Child*, explains that "children's grief does not always show itself in ways adults

approve or can even recognize. Tears, loss of appetite, and disturbed sleep, almost universal in mourning adults, may be almost or completely absent in a grief-stricken child whose distress may show up in . . . a stalwart refusal to admit to feeling anything at all." Arnold demonstrates this clearly, particularly when he goes to bed that first night in the room he previously shared with his brother. "He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun."

The mistake the adults make is in forgetting that Arnold is a child. Uncle Andy, who doted on Eugie, taunts Arnold by pointing out to the other men, "If we d've shot our brother, we d've come runnin' back to the house, cryin' like a baby." But as Leach points out, that kind of response to grief is more typical of adults than of children. Andy is a grown man, and what he would have done does not help explain what a child should have done. The sheriff points out to Arnold's father, "It's come to my notice that the most reasonable guys are mean ones. They don't feel nothing." But Arnold is not one of the "guys" the sheriff has come across in his duties. He is not a hardened criminal, but a little boy.

Arnold's behavior rings true to anyone who spends time observing children, or who can remember what it was like to be a child. When Arnold realizes what he has done, his first action is to pick the half a tub of peas he was sent for. Isn't it typical for a child to try to make up for a bad deed by making a display of doing his chores? After he has told his parents that Eugie is dead, he runs out to the barn to hide in the loft—again, very typical behavior. (In the often-told family legend about the time I kicked in the screen door, I hide out in the attic until my parents come home and find me.) Andy may be right about how he would respond to a terrible accident, but he shows no understanding of Arnold's predictable behavior.

The neighbors seem to want Arnold to feel guilty, and to see him punished. Orion, who is older than Eugie and married, almost brags when he claims, "If I'd of done what he done, Pa would've hung my pelt by the side of that big coyote's in the barn." The question of Arnold's guilt and feelings of guilt has drawn the attention of reviewers, some of whom believe that Arnold—consciously or subconsciously—killed Eugie on purpose because he was jealous of his older brother's power and status. The sheriff raises the issue when he asks whether Arnold and Eugie were "good friends," and whether they ever quarreled. I cannot find any hint of Arnold intending to cause harm in the description of the accident, but Leach explains that guilt feelings are to be expected in Arnold whether he intended harm or not: "Most children will feel guilt over any death which is significant to them .... M ost children find it difficult to sort out feelings from actions and may believe, or half-believe, that the anger they felt on the morning of the death actually caused or contributed to it. Brothers and sisters often wish each other dead—and then find themselves apparently monstrously all-powerful."

Through all of the neighbors' and relatives' sly accusing, Arnold's parents remain silent. They do not say anything against Arnold, but neither do they speak up for him. Most importantly, they do not speak to him. On the ride to the sheriff's office, Arnold sits between his father and his uncle. "No one spoke." Arnold avoids his family for the rest of

the day, but joins them again at dinner time. Again, "no one spoke at supper, and his mother, who sat next to him, leaned her head in her hand all through the meal, curving her fingers over her eyes so as not to see him." In the story's most heartbreaking scene, when Arnold goes downstairs to see his mother, "hoping to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside his brother," she will not even let him enter her room. She rejects him, sends him back to bed, and he is left only with an insistent silence: "silently, he left the door and for a stricken moment stood by the rocker. Outside everything was still. The fences, the shocks of wheat seen through the window before him were so still it was as if they moved and breathed in the daytime and had fallen silent with the lateness of the hour."

The image of the nine-year-old boy standing in the dark, utterly alone and "unpardonable," is painful. Arnold's reaching for his mother, his wish to "clasp her in his arms and pommel her breasts with his head. grieving with her for Eugene," is instinctive, and her rejection seems cruel. But psychology points out that her response, too, is natural and predictable. Leach cautions parents that "it is easy to be so lost in personal grief that the child's is underestimated. This is especially liable to happen when it is a brother or sister who dies. Parents feel themselves the principal mourners and those around them do too. The grief of brothers and sisters is often underestimated; sometimes they are openly pushed out of the way." Arnold's mother fails him, but she is not cruel—at least not intentionally. Like Arnold, she is doing her best to bear an unbearable grief.

Although "The Stone Boy" depicts characters who have failed themselves and each other, Berriault does not condemn them for their failures. She presents a clear and unfaltering narration of painful events, and challenges the reader to confront the images directly, but she does not judge. This is a story, she seems to say, of a terrible grief and the damage is does to a family. There are no villains, and no heroes—just ordinary people struggling with an extraordinary circumstance. As she explains in a *Literary Review* interview with Bonnie Lyons and Bill Oliver, "If there is a recurring theme" in her work, "it's an attempt at compassionate understanding. Judgment is the prevalent theme in our society, but it's from fiction we learn compassion and comprehension."

Source: Cynthia Bily, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

Brent has a Ph.D. in American Culture, with a specialization in cinema studies, from the University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in American cinema. In the following essay, she discusses the imagery of light and darkness in terms of judgment and redemption in "The Stone Boy."

The main character in Gina Berriault's "The Stone Boy" is a nine-year old boy who, having accidentally shot and killed his older brother with a .22 caliber rifle, suffers from such extreme shock that he is unable to express even the slightest signs of grief. However, although Arnold shows no outward signs of sadness or remorse, his fear of judgment and his yearning for forgiveness are expressed through the story's imagery. Arnold's feelings of guilt and fear of judgment are expressed through references to light, which are suggestive of a godlike presence, both accusatory and redemptive. The stares and looks of the members of his family and community also indicate themes of judgment and guilt, as associated with vision and light. Finally, imagery suggestive of the mother-child relationship implies the possibility of redemption and mercy through the spiritual properties of maternal love and forgiveness.

Arnold's awareness of the properties of light, after he accidentally shoots his brother Eugie, evoke a Christian iconography suggestive of a godlike presence. After accidentally shooting Eugie in the face and killing him in the early hours of the morning, Arnold goes to the garden to pick peas, as he and his brother had originally planned. In a state of shock at this horrible event, Arnold automatically behaves as he normally would. Yet, while Arnold at this point seems to have no consciousness that his brother has been killed, his awareness that the sun has risen is described in language which implies the hand of God upon his back: "It was a warmth on his back, like a large hand laid firmly there, that made him raise his head." At this point, the large warm hand evokes imagery of a forgiving God, who has placed a "warm," comforting or guiding hand on the back of the boy.

Later in the story, however, Arnold, associating vision with light, comes to associate light through the gaze of others with the negative judgment of those around him. Arnold's perception of condemnation in people's gaze is reinforced by his perception of the condemnation implied by silence. When Arnold can only tell the sheriff that his reason for not immediately informing the family of his brother's death was that he had gone to pick peas, Arnold perceives that he has been deemed a guilty man: "it was then he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him." And it is his father's eyes in particular which seem to condemn him: "Arnold shifted on the bench, his only feeling a small one of compunction imposed by his father's eyes." The sheriff's judgment of Arnold takes on religious implications when he sends Arnold and his father home after questioning: "Then the sheriff lifted his hand like a man taking an oath." From Arnold's perspective, the sheriff's judgment upon him comes in the form of a "oath" before God, proclaiming him guilty. The judgment represented by the sheriff's hand contrasts markedly with the judgment represented by the warmth of the sun as the hand of God.

After leaving the sheriff's office, Arnold, his father and his uncle return to their car. It is at this point that Arnold becomes increasingly aware of the eyes of others bearing down upon him: "Arnold saw that his uncle's eyes had absorbed the knowingness from the sheriff's eyes. Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff had said, and didn't care about his brother." Because Arnold experiences the gaze of others as a judgment upon him, an affirmation of his guilt, he responds by deferentially avoiding their eyes: "Arnold lowered his eyelids meekly against his uncle's stare." In the light of the accusatory stares of those around him, Arnold attempts to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. When relatives and neighbors stop by his family's house that evening, Arnold is almost paralyzed by the fear of calling attention to himself, "He knew that although they were talking only about Eugie they were thinking of him, and if he got up, if he moved even his foot, they would all be alerted."

Getting ready for bed that night, Arnold fears both the darkness and the light. Fear of darkness is sometimes associated with fear of one's own conscience, or fear of death. Contrary to his usual habits, Arnold waits until the last minute to blow out the light after going to bed that night: "In his room he undressed by lamp light, although he and Eugie had always undressed in the dark, and not until he was lying in his bed did he blow out the flame." But, once in bed, Arnold again associates light with the godlike judgment of a "merciless sun": "He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun." When he awakens in the middle of the night and approaches his parents bedroom, in hopes of expressing to his mother his grief over his brother's death, Arnold is met with an implied condemnation by his mother; she responds to his knock by replying: "Go back! Is night when you get afraid?" His mother's reply harshly implies that Arnold is afraid of the night because he is afraid of his own guilty conscience. With this condemnation, she turns him away from the possibility of redemption he seeks in her arms.

Upon being condemned and turned away by his mother, Arnold again fears the light, which is associated with his father's judgment upon him. He sees his father outside in the yard, "his lantern casting a circle of light by his feet." In association with his father's arrival back in the house, "the lantern still lighting his way," Arnold suddenly becomes aware that he is naked. This sudden awareness of his nakedness is associated with the light which his father's lantern is soon to cast upon him. Arnold's nakedness is symbolic of the nakedness of his soul, as if his father's judgment, upon seeing Arnold, would be utterly unforgiving, since: "his nakedness had become unpardonable." Arnold thus wishes to escape the light of his father's judgment: "At once he went back upstairs, fleeing from his father's lantern."

While Arnold fears the light of judgment in the eyes of his father, he conceptualizes forgiveness and redemption in association with that which is maternal: his mother's breast, the pitcher of milk at the breakfast table, the cow with the newborn calf. In knocking at his mother's door at night, Arnold had imagined a scene of confession or begging of forgiveness at his mother's breast, in hopes of a kind of redemption through maternal love: "He had expected her to realize that he wanted to go down on his knees

by her bed and tell her that Eugie was dead. She did not know it yet, nobody knew it, and yet she was sitting up in bed, waiting to be told. He had expected her to tell him to come in and allow him to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside his brother. He had come to clasp her in his arms and pommel her breasts with his head, grieving with her for Eugene."

Turned away from this possibility of forgiveness at his mother's breast in the night, Arnold the next morning vows never to ask his parents for anything again. He lowers his eyes deferentially, fearing their accusatory stares: "At breakfast, he kept his eyelids lowered to deny the night." But when his father reminds his sister to pass him the pitcher of milk at breakfast, Arnold is given some hope that he may be welcomed back into the bosom of his family: "Relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again." The pitcher of milk is suggestive of the nurturing powers of maternal love and forgiveness, for which Arnold longs. This maternal imagery as a sign of redemption is echoed in Arnold's father's mention of the cow which has gone up the mountain to have its calf. Arnold immediately sets out to retrieve the cow and newborn calf, to "switch the cow down the mountain slowly, and the calf would run at its mother's side." The image of the calf running at its mother's side is evocative of Arnold's desire to be back in his mother's good graces, to regain her maternal affection and nurturing love.

But, while the image of the cow and calf express a sense of hope that Arnold may be granted his mother's forgiveness, the closing lines of the story leave the reader in doubt as to whether or not Arnold will be capable of asking this of his mother, and whether or not his mother will be capable of granting it. At the point when his mother asks what he had wanted from her the night before, Arnold is incapable of telling her: "'I don't want nothing,' he said flatly." The final line of the story leaves the reader with a chilling doubt as to whether or not Arnold and his mother will ever be able to restore the mother-child bond represented by the cow and calf: "Then he went out the door and down the back steps, frightened by his answer."

Source: Liz Brent, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #3

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publications. In the following essay, Korb discusses several of the questions raised by "The Stone Boy" and poses possible answers.

In 1975, in one of her rare public statements, Gina Berriault commented on the weltanschauung, or "world view," of her writing. She told *World Authors*: "My work is an investigation of reality which is, simply, so full of ambiguity and of answers that beget further questions that to pursue it is an impossible task and a completely absorbing necessity. It appears to me that all the terrors are countered by a perceptible degree by the attempts of some writers to make us known to one another and thus to impart or revive a reverence for life." Berriault's statement certainly applies to her wellknown short story which invites analysis and inquiry but provides no absolute answers.

The Stone Boy first appeared in *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1957, but it drew the attention of reviewers when it was included in Berriault's collection, *The Mistress, and Other Stories*, eight years later. *The Stone Boy* is immediately riveting in its subject matter. Nine-year-old Arnold, while passing through a wire fence, catches his gun. It discharges, and a bullet lodges in the neck of his older brother, Eugie. Eugie dies. However, this tragic incident is only the departure point for Berriault's story of alienation and failed relationships. For Arnold does not immediately return to his family and tell them what happened; instead, he continues with the task he set out to do that morning: picking peas. His family is horror stricken, both by the news of Eugie's death and by Arnold's reaction to it. They do not know how to view Arnold so they cling to the sheriff's assessment of Arnold. According to the sheriff, Arnold is such a cold person that he didn't bother to change his schedule because there was nothing that could alter the fact of Eugie's death. The sheriff labels Arnold a "monster," but in essence, he defines Arnold as a sociopath. By the next day, Arnold, too, comes to accept this opinion of himself, and in one heartfelt moment, transforms himself into such a being.

While *The Stone Boy* does not employ intricate narrative devices, it nevertheless presents a full, compelling story. This story invites even the casual reader to speculate as to its whys and wherefores. Ambiguity, a central theme in much of Berriault's work and to her perception of her writing, emerges foremost in the story, almost from the opening lines. Although the casual reader may be tempted to think this story will be a coming-of-age or a rite-ofpassage story, Berriault dispels that notion quickly and efficiently, with Eugie's sudden death. At this point, the story truly begins to invite the readers' careful analysis, as Berriault would want it to.

Although Charles Poore wrote in *The New York Times* that Arnold's "murder" of Eugie is "explicit," whether Eugie's death was an accident emerges as just one of Berriault's many ambiguities. A solid determination of any intention to kill Eugie cannot be found in Arnold's reaction to this horrible event. Later in the story it is revealed that Arnold felt "terror" at what had occurred; at the moment it happens, however, Arnold only feels "discomfort." In the immediate seconds following Eugie's death, Arnold views his dead

brother as an object causing displeasure bordering on disgust. He notes that Eugie's blood "had an obnoxious movement, like that of a parasite." Arnold is loath to approach or touch his brother; to determine whether or not Eugie is able to get up, Arnold only nudges him with a foot. When Eugie does not get up, Arnold commences picking peas.

The description of this task seems straightforward, with Arnold's physical reaction mirroring his mental reaction: "Arnold set his rifle on the ground and stood up. He picked up the tub and, dragging it behind him, walked along by the willows to the garden fence and climbed through. He went down on his knees among the tangled vines." However, Arnold is metaphorically repeating the actions that led to Eugie's death; climbing through the garden fence is like climbing through the wire fence into the pasture; even the tangled vines echo the enmeshment of the barbed wire. Note is also made that Arnold's "hands were strange to him." While Arnold determines that this is caused by the cold weather, which numbs his hands, in reality, they have turned into something foreign—the hands of a killer. The numbing of Arnold's hands foreshadows the numbing of his very soul.

Indeed, the story provides substantiation for both a reading of Arnold as murderer and Arnold as accidental killer. The opening scene clearly sets up Arnold's animosity toward his brother, as he laughs "derisively" when Eugie is having trouble getting out of bed. In the kitchen, Arnold recognizes Eugie's vanity—his older brother "offer[s] silent praise unto himself. "Also in the kitchen, Arnold notes that Eugie's "brown curls grew thick and matted, close around his ears and down his neck, tapering there to a small whorl." To Arnold's perceptive eye, Eugie's hair forms the very bullseye that Arnold's bullet will strike just a short time later. At the same time, however, Arnold cares for and idealizes his brother. Arnold's father, too, has noted the affection that Arnold seems to have for his older brother. Indeed, Arnold's conflicted feelings for Eugie are best expressed by one sentence: "Eugie had had a way of looking at him, slyly and mockingly and yet confidentially, that had summed up how they both felt about being brothers." Based on this evidence, answering the question as to whether or not Arnold intended or even wanted to kill his brother is not possible.

Another question posed by the story is why Arnold and his family so readily accept the sheriff's judgment that the boy's actions demonstrate that he has no feelings. For some undisclosed reason, the sheriff offers no other explanation. With little thought as to why Arnold would continue to pick peas, and with no explanation forthcoming from Arnold himself, the family's authority figures—Arnold's father and Uncle Andy—decide to accept the sheriff's point of view; they willfully believe Arnold to be that merciless, unfeeling person. Arnold internalizes these opinions, particularly because the criticism comes from Uncle Andy, whose power over Arnold derives from his close resemblance to Eugie. Uncle Andy's disapproval is further reinforced by the neighbors' reactions. While Arnold hopes for their understanding, remaining in the parlor despite his discomfort so "they would see that he was only Arnold and not the person the sheriff thought he was," Andy's vocal assessment of the situation prevails.

By the end of the evening, Arnold is almost completely undone. Lying alone in bed that night, "[H]e felt nothing, not any grief." However, Arnold still retains a spark of humanity.

When he wakes suddenly in the night he only wants his mother to comfort him while he "tell[s] her about the terror he had felt when he knelt beside Eugie." This is the first time the reader has heard about Arnold's true reaction to Eugie's death, but the reader hears little else about it, for Arnold's mother not only rejects him but reminds him of how his community now views him. Her words, "Is night when you get afraid?" tell him that she believes that her son is indeed the kind of monster who can commit any sort of atrocity in the light of day. While returning to his room, Arnold realizes that he is naked, viewing it as an "unpardonable" offense. His state of undress symbolizes his feeling that his family and his community have seen through his skin, into the hidden recesses of his heart. Ironically, that terror actually resided in his heart at Eugie's death, not malice, has no bearing anymore. Without anyone willing to see the "real" boy, Arnold becomes what they choose to see.

The next morning, however, Arnold almost grasps a chance at rehabilitation. His father forces his sister to acknowledge Arnold's presence at the breakfast table. Although "relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again," Arnold almost immediately "called upon his pride to protect him from them." This final scene begs the question of why Arnold refuses to accept their peace offerings. Many possible answers can be posed, but as with other questions the story raises, perhaps no answer seems satisfactory. Arnold may have come to accept his new role in the course of one night, or he may be so angry at his parents for allowing him to be unfairly cast that he wants to punish them by withholding himself.

Perhaps the most likely answer stems from Eugie's and Arnold's relationship. Arnold has always modeled himself after Eugie, "enthralled" by his older brother. Because Eugie valued his place as the eldest child, so did Arnold. Now Arnold has become the eldest boy, and he feels he must fulfill the tasks that thus befall him. This explanation may help clarify why Arnold picked peas while Eugie lay dead—because that was the task he and Eugie had set out to fulfill. Now, at the breakfast table, as Arnold seems ready to accept his parents' tacit apology, his father announces that a cow and her calf are up in the mountains. "That had been Eugie's job, Arnold thought." This short exchange reminds Arnold of what Eugie's loss will mean to the family, that he is to blame for it, and that his family had excluded him in his time of need. When Arnold volunteers to get the calf himself, his is attempting to step into Eugie's shoes, but he knows that he will never be able to truly do so.

Although so much of *The Stone Boy* is ambiguous and cannot be fully understood, what is clear is that by the end of the story, Arnold has undergone a complete transformation. When he tells his mother that he doesn't want anything, his legs are "trembling from the fright his answer gave him." Arnold does not embrace his new identity but feels he has little choice but to take it on. The reader is left with little doubt that the sheriff's dreadful prophecy of seeing Arnold again in the future is likely to come true.

Source: Rena Korb, for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Critical Essay #4

Madsen Hardy has a doctorate in English literature and is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, she discusses how Berriault uses figurative language to illuminate the protagonist's emotional state in

"The Stone Boy" is named for its protagonist, nine-year-old Arnold, who symbolically turns to stone after he accidentally kills his older brother in a hunting accident. In a story composed mostly of realistic exposition, this title stands out as a striking metaphor. Stone is cold and inert. It is associated with cruelty and also with death, both of which are states of unfeeling. A "stone boy" is simultaneously living and inert, warm and cold, sentient and insentient. While many stories offer readers the chance to vicariously experience a range of different emotions, "The Stone Boy" brilliantly represents emotion's absence. Berriault uses both precise, unadorned description and lyrical similes to represent almost paradoxically—what it feels like to be unable to feel.

There is a contrast between the matter of fact exposition that makes up most of the story which reflects the way the literal minded farm community thinks and speaks—and the figurative language associated with Arnold's moments of heightened trauma. Among the latter, particularly significant are the similes that Berriault uses to invest the inanimate land and atmosphere of the farm with sentience. Personification is a form of metaphor in which an inanimate object is endowed with the qualities of a living being. Berriault uses similes to the same effect. For example, when Berriault writes that the shocks of wheat outside of Arnold's window were "so still it was as if they moved and breathed in the daytime and had fallen silent with the lateness of the hour" she attributes an almost human animation to the wheat by light of day, then remarks on its death-like absence. In the same passage, she also endows the quiet of the nighttime atmosphere with sight and consciousness: "It was a silence that seemed to observe his father." Such personifying similes are interesting not only because they stand in contrast to the style of the majority of the story's narration, but because they relate to the larger themes of life and death, emotion and coldness. Through the title, Berriault compares Arnold to an inanimate object, but through her similes, she gives inanimate objects human qualities, drawing a connection between feeling and its absence.

The opening scene of "The Stone Boy," taking place before Arnold's humanity has been called into question, describes the events of an ordinary morning as Arnold perceives them. Arnold experiences a range of typical emotions in regard to his older brother Eugie, from resentment and envy to admiration. The boys get up early to fulfill their responsibility to pick peas in the cool of the morning. Arnold takes his rifle with him to shoot for ducks, despite Eugie's teasing and the fact that it is not hunting season. While crawling through a fence, the hammer of Arnold's rifle gets caught on a piece of wire. When he tries to free it, it fires in the direction of his brother, who has just gone through the fence ahead of him. Berriault narrates the terrible events in direct, realistic language. "His rifle caught on the wire and he jerked at it. The air was rocked by the sound of the shot. Feeling foolish, he lifted his face, baring it to an expected shower of derision from his brother. But Eugie did not turn around. Instead, from his crouching

position, he fell to his knees and then pitched forward onto his face." Arnold thinks first about being teased for his clumsiness with the gun. When he sees that Eugie has been hit, he is completely surprised. As Arnold watches Eugie die, he undergoes a kind of death himself, for these feelings of foolishness and surprise are the last ordinary 'human' emotions that Arnold experiences. The impact of Eugie's death stands in contrast to the complete normalcy of Arnold's thoughts and feelings over the course of the morning, up through his last defensive feeling of embarrassment.

Then Arnold makes a choice that defines him as a "stone boy"—he continues with his morning chore of picking peas as if nothing remarkable had happened at all. Only when he returns home with the harvest and realizes that the family will wonder where Eugie is does he tell them flatly, "Eugie's dead." Based on the fact that Arnold has expressed no outward sign of grief or remorse as evidenced in his direct and emotionless report of the tragedy, his family and community judge him. They agree with the county sheriff's assessment that Arnold is "too reasonable" to feel anything and they condemn him, leaving him outside of the circle of their human society at a time when his unarticulated need for warmth and empathy is most intense. They treat him as if he were an object rather than a subject, a rock rather than a person. Undeniably, Arnold is emotionally numb. The third-person limited narrator has access to Arnold's inner thoughts and feelings, and these do not directly refute the grounds for his condemnation. Indeed, Arnold regards himself as no longer human, acting only in order to maintain the family routine and reduce his conspicuousness, and making no attempt at contact with the people around him. Because Arnold becomes so detached from the innermost parts of himself, the narrational position may seem to offer readers little more than an objective account of events over the course of twenty-four hours following the shooting. So then, is it correct to conclude, along with the sheriff and Arnold's Uncle Andy, that Arnold is simply cruel?

Berriault delicately offsets the flat, reasonable narration of the events of the day with striking figurative descriptions of the natural world. She uses lyrical language to define a view of the inanimate realm of nature as conscious and perceptive. This view, which is implicitly Arnold's, stands in stark contrast to the spoken language the boy uses to communicate within the hostile human community. While the story's exposition—like Arnold's own explanations of his actions—is almost cruelly reasonable, Berriault's figurative language is both gentle and illogical. The best writers employ figurative language such as metaphors and similes not just to make their writing sound beautiful or interesting, but to emphasize their ideas and add dimension to their characters. Berriault uses personification and simile to create a sense of empathy between Arnold and the farmland around him. By using figurative language to endow natural objects with feelings, Berriault suggests that Arnold's very "stoniness" is a testament to the profundity of his experience of loss.

In death Eugie becomes part of the inanimate natural world, separate from human forms of communication. After Arnold watches his brother die, he calls out to him, "Hey, Eugie," and is answered with silence. As Arnold looks at the inert body, Berriault uses a simile to connect Eugie, in death, to the non-human realm of the farm setting: "Eugie was as still as the morning around them." From this point forward, Arnold too enters a

non-human realm. Hereafter, he is detached from his family, his community, and what he had always taken for granted as himself, a boy defined against the towering figure of his older brother. As he leaves the scene of the accident and goes to pick peas, doing the task assigned to him, he cannot feel himself, "his hands were strange to him, and not until some time had passed did he realize that the pods were numbing his fingers." Hereafter as well, nature is endowed with human characteristics. Berriault uses a simile that personifies the morning sun: "It was a warmth on his back, like a large hand laid firmly there, that made him raise his head." The morning sun—an authoritative figure that is potentially both intimidating and comforting—calls him back to his role in the distant farmhouse, even as it reminds him of the irrevocable loss of that role. The sun reaches out and touches him, something that no one else does over the course of the harrowing day.

At the end of the day, in a scene that is contrasted to the normalcy of the story's opening, Arnold goes to bed by himself in the room he had always shared with Eugie. At this moment when Arnold's loss is so tangible, Berriault writes, "He felt nothing, not any grief." This description is consistent with the conclusion the neighbors have just reached, discussing Arnold's cold "reasonableness" as if he were not there, as if he were as imperceptive as stone. Lacking any other way to understand his state of shock, Arnold has accepted the literal-minded explanation offered by the sheriff and repeated by the others. "Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what had made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff had said, and didn't care about his brother." However, Berriault subtly modifies this assessment of Arnold's emotional state with an unusual comparison. "There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him, the way the house and fields must feel under a merciless sun." Arnold has no reasonable explanation for his numbness, so he draws a strange analogy between his feelings and those of the inanimate world with which he is most intimate. He imagines that the house and the fields have feeling—not a feeling that is comparable to the range of emotions he and those close to him have ever experienced, but feeling nonetheless. They feel "immense silence" and "crawling." They feel the dreadful absence of emotion, connection, and communication. They are passive and helpless before the "merciless sun," but they are not cruel. By all appearances Arnold does not feel sorry, his own loss or the loss that he has inflicted on his family, but he does feel for the world of objects of which he and Eugie, each in his way, are both now a part.

As the story ends, Arnold still feels like stone. His mother has rejected his bid for comfort, and he has in turn denied this bid. Verbal communication remains on both sides reasonable and cruel. But the careful reader sees the difference between what Arnold says and who he is, between his flat demeanor and the vast depth of his loss.

Source: Sarah Madsen Hardy, "The Sentient Stone: Simile and Empathy," for *Short Stories for Students*, The Gale Group, 2000.

Adaptations

"The Stone Boy" was adapted into a movie by 20th-Century Fox in 1984. Berriault wrote the screenplay.

Topics for Further Study

The sheriff suggested only two possible explanations for Arnold's behavior following the death of his brother. Do you think there are other possible explanations? What are they? Do you think Arnold's actions demonstrate a psychological disability on Arnold's part?

In the 1990s, the rise of teen violence has alarmed many Americans. Investigate how teen violence has affected American society over the decades since the 1950s. Do you think teen violence has worsened? If so, what factors have attributed to this rise?

The sheriff's description of Arnold, as a person who "don't feel nothing," describes sociopaths. Investigate sociopathic behavior and then determine whether or not you believe Arnold to be a sociopath.

The 1950s, when this story was written, is generally regarded as a period epitomized by happy families, economic prosperity, and strong moral values. How do you think typical readers of the 1950s and 1960s might have reacted to the story?

Family farms in the United States have been on a decline for most of the 20th century. Conduct research on reasons for this decline and the effect it has had on farming families.

Compare and Contrast

1960: The United States had close to 4 million farms, which totaled around 990 million acres. The average farm had assets worth almost $53,000 and earned just under $10,000 per year. Around 15.5 million Americans lived on farms.

1990: There were only a little over 2 million farms in operation in the United States, also totaling around 990 million acres. The average farm had assets worth around $460,000 and earned a little over $91,000 per year. Just under 5 million Americans lived on farms.

1960: 1,200 accidental shooting deaths occurred in American homes. Just over 51 percent of polled Americans said they had a gun in the house.

1990s: 800 accidental shooting deaths occurred in American homes in 1995. In 1991, 46 percent of polled Americans had a gun in the house. Of the American households with guns, 40 percent also had children in the house.

1950: There are an estimated 54 million rifles, shotguns, and handguns in the United States. Around 2,399,000 firearms are available for sale.

1990: There are an estimated 201 million firearms in the United States. Around 5,122,000 are available for sale.

1965: Less than five 15 year olds per 100,000 commit murder.

1992: Ten 15 year olds per 100,000 commit murder. Studies show that most high school students either carry or have carried illegal guns or can get them easily. As many as 1 in 20 students had brought their guns to school.

What Do I Read Next?

The Butcher Boy (1992) by Irish writer Patrick McCabe chronicles the descent of a neglected boy as he plunges deeper into madness and violence.

The short story "Walking Out" (1980) by David Quammen tells the gripping story of a father-son hunting trip that goes awry.

Gina Berriault's second novel, *Conference of Victims* (1962, 1985), describes the effects a man's suicide has on his closest family members.

Fyodor Dostoevsky's classic novel *Crime and Punishment* (1911) explores the psychological effects of murder.

Andre Dubus' short story "The Fat Girl" (1988) tells of a girl who withdraws from the world through food.

Women in Their Beds by Gina Berriault (1996) includes some of the author's finest works from her 40-year career as well as new short stories.

Flannery O'Connor's short story "Good Country People" (1955) tells about how the actions of a merciless man affects a farm family.

Further Study

Berriault, Gina. "Almost Impossible," in *The Confidence Woman: Twenty-six Women Writers at Work* , Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1991, pp. 127-32.

Discusses the nature of writing, focusing on students' reactions to Berriault's short stories.

Berriault, Gina, with Bonnie Lyons and Bill Oliver. An interview with Berriault, in *The Literary Review*, Summer, 1994, pp. 714-723.

Berriault discusses how she became a writer, her writing style and major themes, and contemporary American fiction.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Short Stories for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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