A Study of History Study Guide

A Study of History by Arnold J. Toynbee

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Introduction

Arnold Toynbee's multi-volume *A Study of History* is one of the major works of historical scholarship published in the twentieth century. The first volume was published in London in 1934, and subsequent volumes appeared periodically until the twelfth and final volume was published in London in 1961. A two-volume abridgement of volumes 1-10 was prepared by D. C. Somervell with Toynbee's cooperation and published in 1947 (volume one) and 1957 (volume two) in London.

A Study of History in its original form is a huge work. The first ten volumes contain over six thousand pages and more than three million words. Somervell's abridgement, containing only about one-sixth of the original, runs to over nine hundred pages. The size of the work is in proportion to the grandeur of Toynbee's purpose, which is to analyze the genesis, growth, and fall of every human civilization ever known. In Toynbee's analysis, this amounts to five living civilizations and sixteen extinct ones, as well as several that Toynbee defines as arrested civilizations.

Toynbee detects in the rise and fall of civilizations a recurring pattern, and it is the laws of history behind this pattern that he analyzes in *A Study of History*.

From the outset, *A Study of History* was a controversial work. It won wide readership amongst the general public, especially in the United States, and after World War II Toynbee was hailed as a prophet of his times. On the other hand, his work was viewed with skepticism by academic historians, many of whom argued that his methods were unscientific and his conclusions unreliable or simply untrue. Despite these criticisms, however, *A Study of History* endures as a provocative vision of where humanity has been, and why, and where it may be headed.

Author Biography

Arnold J. Toynbee was born in London on April 14, 1889, the son of Harry V. Toynbee, a social worker, and Sarah Edith Marshall Toynbee, a historian. Showing academic promise at a young age, Toynbee won scholarships to attend Winchester School from 1902 to 1907, and then Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied Classics and graduated in 1911. In the same year, Toynbee pursued his interest in ancient Greek history by studying at the British Archeological School in Athens. In 1912, he became a fellow and tutor at Balliol College, a position he held for three years. Unable to perform military service because of his health, during World War I he worked in the Political Intelligence Department of the War Office and was a member of the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. He also held the Koraes Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at London University in 1919.

In 1925, Toynbee began a thirty-year tenure as director of studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and professor of international history at London University. He was a prolific author, writing more than 140 articles and books between 1921 and 1934, including *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922), *Greek Historical Thought* (1924), *Greek Civilisation and Character* (1924), the annual *Survey of International Affairs* (1923-1927), and *A Journey to China* (1931). He was also at work on *A Study of History,* for which he is best known. The first three volumes of this investigation into the rise and fall of civilizations were published in 1934; volumes 4-6 followed in 1939.

From 1943 until 1946, Toynbee directed the Research Department at the Foreign Office. He also attended the second Paris Peace Conference as a British delegate. In 1954, volumes 7-10 of *A Study of History* were published. An abridged version, prepared by D. C. Somervell with Toynbee's cooperation, appeared in two volumes (1947 and 1957).

Toynbee's massive work made him one of the best-known historians of his time although it also proved controversial. The final, twelfth volume, *Reconsiderations* (1961), was an attempt to answer his many critics.

After finishing *A Study of History*, Toynbee continued to publish at a prolific rate. Between 1956 and 1973, he wrote sixteen books. These included *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (1956), in which he advocated a return to spiritual values, *Change and Habit: The Challenge of Our Time* (1966), in which he suggested that China might emerge as a unifying influence in world affairs, and the autobiographical *Experiences* (1969).

Toynbee married Rosalind Murray in 1912, and they had two children. The marriage ended in divorce in 1945. In 1946, Toynbee married Veronica Marjorie Boulter, a research associate and writer. They collaborated in writing the *Survey of International Affairs*.

Toynbee died in York, England, on October 22, 1975.

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Plot Summary

Chapter 1: The Unit of Historical Study

In *A Study of History*, Toynbee first identifies the unit that should be the object of the historian's study. This unit is not an individual nation but an entire civilization. Toynbee identifies five living civilizations: Western Christian, Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Far Eastern. In addition there are sixteen extinct civilizations from which living civilizations developed. Toynbee then makes a distinction between primitive societies, of which there are many, and civilizations, which are comparatively few. He dismisses the idea that there is now only one civilization, the West, and also the notion that all civilization originated in Egypt.

Chapter 2: Geneses of Civilizations

How do civilizations emerge from primitive societies? For Toynbee, the answer does not lie in race; nor does an easy environment provide a key to the origins of civilization. On the contrary, civilizations arise out of creative responses to difficult situations. It is difficulty, rather than ease, that proves the stimulus. Toynbee identifies five challenges that aid the process: a hard environment; a new environment; one or more "blows," such as a military defeat; pressures, such as a frontier society subjected to frequent attack; and penalizations, such as slavery or other measures in which one class or race is oppressed by another. Some challenges, however, prove to be too severe and do not result in a civilization's growth.

Chapter 3: Growths of Civilizations

After examining why some civilizations (Polynesian, Eskimo) cease to develop, Toynbee discusses how the growth of a society is to be measured. He concludes that neither military nor political expansion, nor advances in agricultural or industrial techniques, are reliable criteria. These are external indicators, whereas what is important is "etherialization." In this process, the energies of a society are directed away from external material obstacles, which have been overcome, towards challenges that arise from within and require an inner or spiritual response. Growth happens because of creative individuals who exhibit a pattern of withdrawal from and return to society.

Chapter 4: Breakdowns of Civilizations

The breakdown of a civilization, Toynbee holds, is not due to some inevitable cosmic law. Nor is it caused by loss of control over the physical or human environment, a decline in technology, or military aggression. A breakdown happens when the creative minority loses its creative power and the majority no longer follows it, or follows it only because it is compelled to do so. This results in a loss of social unity and the

emergence of a disaffected "proletariat." Creative minorities lose their power because they have a habit of "resting on their oars" following their success and becoming infatuated with the past. Therefore they fail to meet the next challenge successfully.

Chapter 5: Disintegration of Civilizations

When a civilization disintegrates, it splits into three factions: a "dominant minority," which is a degenerate stage of a formerly creative minority; an "internal proletariat," which is a mass of people within the civilization who no longer have any allegiance to the dominant minority and may rebel against it; and an "external proletariat" that exists beyond the frontiers of the civilization and resists being incorporated into it. An internal proletariat may react violently against the dominant minority, but later there may be a more peaceful reaction, culminating in the discovery of a "higher religion."

Social changes in a disintegrating civilization are accompanied by changes in behavior, beliefs, and ways of life. There is either a sense of "drift," in which people believe the world is ruled by chance, or a sense of sin, both of which are substitutes for the creative energy that has been lost. There may also be "archaism," a desire to return to the past, or "futurism," a revolutionary mode in which old institutions are scrapped. Disintegration of a civilization proceeds in a rhythm of "routs" followed by "rallies." During this process, creative personalities will emerge as different kinds of "saviours."

Chapter 6: Universal States

A universal state appears as part of the "rally" stage in the disintegration of a civilization; it follows a "Time of Troubles" and brings political unity. However, it is still part of the process of disintegration. Although universal states fail to save themselves, they do offer unintended advantages to other institutions, such as the higher religions of their internal proletariats. Universal states provide high "conductivity" between different geographic areas and between social classes. They are oftenruled with tolerance, which helps to facilitate the spread of higher religions. Many of the institutions established by a universal state, such as communications, legal systems, weights and measures, money, and civil services, are made use of by communities other than those for which they were designed.

Chapter 7: Universal Churches

Toynbee analyzes the relationship between churches and civilizations. He repudiates the idea that a church is like a social cancer that leads to the decline of the universal state. But the idea that churches act as chrysalises, keeping civilization alive as it evolves from one manifestation into the next, is not the entire truth either, he writes. Toynbee argues that, rather than religion being a by-product of civilization, the whole purpose of a civilization is to provide an opportunity for one of the higher religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam) to emerge.

Chapter 8: Heroic Ages

When a disintegrating civilization is destroyed by barbarians who have previously co-existed alongside it, the result is a Heroic Age. The barbarians are not sufficiently advanced to benefit from the legacy of the civilization they have destroyed although they may commemorate their victories in epic poetry. A Heroic Age is an interlude between the death of one civilization and the birth of another. It leads to a Dark Age, out of which civilization reemerges.

Chapter 9: Contacts between Civilizations in Space

When diverse civilizations come into contact with each other, there is usually conflict, with disastrous results. A civilization under assault may fight back by military means; with ideological propaganda (as the Soviet Union did against the West); by intensely cultivating its own religion; or by creating a higher religion. A victorious civilization will sometimes become militarized, to its own ultimate cost. It also pays the price of having the culture of the alien civilization seep into its own social life, which may have adverse consequences. A civilization that subjugates another may make the mistake of regarding the conquered people as "heathens," "barbarians," or "natives."

Chapter 10: Contacts between Civilizations in Time

Toynbee surveys the many renaissances in history in which one civilization has drawn new inspiration from a civilization of the past. The best-known example is the influence of the dead Hellenic civilization on Western Christendom in the late medieval period (the Italian Renaissance).

Chapter 11: Law and Freedom in History

Does history unfold according to laws of nature or is the process random? Toynbee argues for the former. He cites examples from human affairs such as business and economics that show the operation of predictable laws. Then he points to a cyclic pattern of war and peace in modern Western history and notes that disintegrating civilizations follow a similar pattern of rout-and-rally. Humankind can harness these laws of nature to its benefit although the extent to which it is able to do so depends on its own psychology and on its relationship with God, who represents a higher law than the law of nature.

Chapter 12: Prospects of Western Civilization

Worship of the nation-state and militarism are negative aspects of modern Western civilization, Toynbee holds, but it has also achieved positive results in promoting democracy and education. Toynbee discusses prospects for world peace, world

government, and issues arising from modern technology. The price a society pays for freedom from want is increasing regimentation, which encroaches on personal freedom. Toynbee holds out the hope that in a mechanized society in which there is more leisure, people will have more energy to devote to spiritual matters.

Characters

Andean

The Andean civilization in Peru emerged on the Andean coast and plateau around the beginning of the Christian era. The challenge it had to overcome was a bleak climate on an almost soil-less plateau. It is not known when its Time of Troubles began, but it lasted until 1430 A.D. and was followed by the universal state of the Inca Empire. A time of peace followed until 1533, when the empire was destroyed by the arrival of the Spanish.

Arabic

The Arabic civilization developed out of the Syriac civilization and flourished mainly in Syriaand Egypt. It was similar to the Iranic civilization; the main difference was that in the Iranic civilization, the predominant faith was Islamic Shi'ism, whereas in the Arabic civilization, Sunnism predominated.

Arrested Civilizations

Arrested civilizations are those that have stayed alive but have failed to grow. They arose in response to a physical or human challenge of unusual severity, on the borderline between the degree that gives stimulus to greater development and that which brings about defeat. They attempted and achieved a *tour de force* but could not grow any further. Examples include, in response to physical challenges, the Polynesians, Eskimos, and Nomads; and in response to human challenges, the Spartans in the Hellenic world and the Osmanlis in the Orthodox Christian world.

Babylonic

Babylonic civilization emerged in Iraq before 1500 B.C. out of the disintegrating Sumeric civilization with which it continued to have much in common. It endured a Time of Troubles during the seventh century B.C. in which it was at war with the Assyrians. Following this, aNeo-Babylonic Empire (a universal state) was established from 610 to 539 B.C. under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. After conquest by Cyrus the Persian, the Babylonic universal state was swallowed up by the universal state of the Achaemenian Empire of Cyrus; Babylonian civilization was absorbed into the Syriac civilization.

Egyptaic

The Egyptaic civilization emerged in the Nile River Valley before 4000 B.C. The challenge it faced was environmental: to clean, drain, and cultivate what was formerly a

jungle-swamp uninhabited by man. It reached a peak of growth and creativity in the fourth dynasty with major achievements in engineering (including the pyramids), political administration, art, and religion. Decline set in with the Time of Troubles from circa 2424 to 2070/60 B.C., and this resulted in a universal state, which lasted from c. 2000 to 1788 B.C. The universal state was overthrown by invasion of the Hykos but was later reestablished as the New Empire. Each universal state produced a "universal peace," the second of which lasted until 1175 B.C. The Egyptaic civilization became extinct in the fifth century A.D. It had no forebears and no successors.

Far Eastern Christian

The Far Eastern Christian civilization arose in Central Asia and perished in 737-741 A.D when it was annexed to the Arab Empire. It had been separate from the rest of the Syriac world for nearly nine hundred years.

Far Eastern□Japanese Offshoot

The Japanese offshoot of the main body of Far Eastern civilization arose in the Japanese Archipelago after 500 A.D. It endured a Time of Troubles from 1185 to 1597 in which there was political disunity and civil war. This period was followed by a universal state until 1863. Japanese civilization produced the religion of Zen Buddhism. It is now in a state of disintegration because of the impact of Western civilization.

Far Eastern□Main Body

The Far Eastern civilization emerged in China before 500 A.D. out of the disintegrating Sinic civilization. It began to break down in the late ninth century A.D. Its Time of Troubles lasted from about 878 to 1280, followed by successive universal states founded by barbarians. The first was the Mongol Empire (1280-1351); another was the Manchu Empire (1644□1853). The Far Eastern remains a living civilization.

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Far Western Christian

The Far Western Christian civilization arose mainly in Ireland after c. 375 A.D. The Celts molded Christianity to fit their own social heritage, and their originality can be seen in their church organization, literature, and art. This civilization was destroyed by a combination of the Vikings from the ninth to eleventh centuries, the ecclesiastical authority of Rome, and the political authority of England in the twelfth century.

Hellenic

The Hellenic civilization was loosely affiliated with the Minoan; its offspring were the Western and Orthodox Christian civilizations. It first emerged in the coasts and islands of the Aegean before 1100 B.C.; the challenge it faced was to overcome barren land, the sea, and the disintegrating Minoan society. The Hellenic civilization's Time of Troubles began in 431 B.C. with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, which ended in victory for Sparta in 404 B.C. The Time of Troubles continued until 32 B.C. when a universal state, the Roman Empire, was established. A time of peace endured to 378 A.D. The Helleniccivilization collapsed with the downfall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. It produced great achievements in politics, art, literature, architecture, science, and philosophy. Notable individuals included Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Socrates, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Zeno.

Hindu

The Hindu civilization arose in North India before 800 A.D. out of the disintegrating Indic civilization. Its Time of Troubles was 1175-1572 A.D., followed by a universal state, the Mughal Empire, 1572-1707. When this collapsed it was replaced within a century by the British Raj, from 1818 to 1947. The Hindu civilization developed the religions of Sikhism and Hinduism. The latter is associated with the name of Sankara, who lived about 800 A.D. The Hindu civilization remains a living one.

Hittite

The Hittite civilization emerged from Cappadocia, just beyond the borders of the Sumeric civilization, before 1500 B.C. Its main challenge was to deal with the disintegrating Sumeric civilization. The Hittites were constantly at war with Egypt from 1352 to 1278 B.C. Hittite civilization was overwhelmed by a wave of migration from 1200 to 1190 B.C.

Indic

The Indic civilization emerged circa 1500 B.C. in the Indus and Ganges river valleys from where it spread to cover the entire Indian subcontinent. The environmental challenge to which it had to respond was the luxuriant tropical forests in the Ganges valley. Indic civilization went through a Time of Troubles up to 322 B.C. after which a universal state, the Mauryan Empire, came into being, 322-185 B.C. Another universal state, the Guptan Empire, arose c. 375□475 A.D.; it was followed by three hundred years of invasion by Huns and Gurjaras. Indic civilization produced the religion of the Vedas, the Buddha (567-487 B.C.), and Jainism.

Iranic

The Iranic civilization was affiliated with the Syriac. It arose in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa before 1300 A.D. out of the disintegrating Syriac civilization. The chrysalis that enabled it to emerge was the Islamic Church. Its "twin" civilization was the Arabic with which it fused in 1516 to form the Islamic civilization. In modern times, the Pan Islamic movement has suggested the coming of a universal state, but this state has not so far occurred.

Mayan

The Mayan civilization emerged in the Central American tropical forests before c. 500 B.C. Its challenge was to overcome the luxuriance of the forest. A Time of Troubles occurred from an unknown date until 300 A.D. after which the First Empire of the Mayas was formed. Although not technologically advanced, the Mayas achieved a high level of civilization, excelling in astronomy. The Mayan civilization came to a rapid and mysterious end in the seventh century A.D. Its ruined cities still remain in the midst of tropical forests.

Mexic

The Mexic civilization arose from the disintegration of the Mayan civilization and it fused with the Yucatec to form a Central American civilization. A Time of Troubles occurred up to 1521 A.D.; the Aztecs were on the verge of establishing a universal state when the Spanish arrived. With the coming of Western civilization, the Mexic civilization lost its distinctive identity.

Minoan

The Minoan civilization emerged in the Aegean islands before 3000 B.C. Its main challenge was the sea. It underwent a Time of Troubles from an unknown date to 1750 B.C. before being unified in a universal state known as the Thalassocracy of Minos. It enjoyed 350 years of peace. The Heroic Age that followed the invasion by barbarians and the disintegration of the Minoan universal state can be glimpsed in the epic poetry of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Orthodox Christian□Main Body

The Orthodox Christian civilization is, with Western civilization, a twin offshoot of Hellenic civilization. It emerged as a result of a schism in the Catholic Church into two bodies, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. This split began with the Iconoclastic controversy in the eighth century and became final in 1054. Orthodox Christian civilization went through a Time of Troubles between 977 and 1372; this period

ended with the establishment of a universal state, the Ottoman Empire, which lasted from 1372 to 1768. Orthodox Christianity is found mainly in southern and eastern Europe.

Orthodox Christian Russian Offshoot

The Russian offshoot of the Orthodox Christian civilization emerged in Russia in the tenth century. Its Time of Troubles began in the twelfth century with the break-up of the Russian Principality of Kiev into warring states; it was aggravated by the invasion of the Mongols in 1238. The Time of Troubles did not end until 1478, when a universal state was established through the union of Muscovy and Novgorod, a state that lasted until 1881. Like all living civilizations, the Russian branch of the Orthodox civilization has been heavily influenced, to the point of breakdown, by Western civilization.

Scandinavian

The Scandinavian civilization emerged after the break-up of the Roman Empire. The Scandinavians had been isolated from Roman Christendom, and their pagan civilization grew as a result of Viking conquests from the eighth to the eleventh century. The civilization was doomed, however, after the Icelanders were converted to Christianity in the year 1000.

Sinic

The Sinic civilization developed in the lower valley of the Yellow River in northern China around 1500 B.C. It had to overcome the challenge of marshes, floods, and extremes of temperature. Its Time of Troubles was from 634 to 221 B.C., after which a universal state, the Ts'in Empire (and later the Han Empire) was formed. The Sinic civilization produced the philosopher Confucius and the great works of Taoism and is also associated with Mahayana Buddhism, which reached it from the Indic civilization.

Sumeric

The Sumeric civilization began in the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley c. 4300-3100. B.C., where it had to overcome the difficult jungle-swamp environment. It faced a Time of Troubles from c. 2677-2298 B.C., in which Sumerian city-states were at war. After this the Empire of Sumer and Akkad established unity and peace in a universal state that lasted until 2230 B.C. It was restored by Hammurabi c. 1947 B.C. and broke up after his death.

Syriac

The Syriac civilization emerged in Syria before 1100 B.C. out of the disintegrating Minoan civilization. From c. 937 to 525 B.C. it went through a Time of Troubles before becoming a universal state in theform of the Achaemenian Empire, c. 525-332 B.C. In the last century B.C., it absorbed the Babylonic civilization. A second universal state occurred during the Arab Caliphate, 640-969 A.D. Three great achievements of Syriac society were the invention of the alphabet, the discovery of the Atlantic Ocean, and a monotheistic conception of God that is common to Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam. Through its universal church, Islam, Syriac civilization contributed to the rise of the Iranic and Arabic civilizations.

Western

Western civilization arose in Western Europe before 700 A.D. Affiliated with the Hellenic civilization, it arose out of the chaos that followed the break-up of the Roman Empire. In the eighth century, it covered only Britain and the dominions of Charlemagne in Western Europe, but it has shown a tendency to expand its boundaries. This expansion began in earnest in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Since then, Western civilization has spread across the globe, encroaching on or absorbing all other living civilizations. This is particularly apparent in the economic and political spheres; this ascendency has not yet obliterated the distinctive cultures of the other civilizations.Western Civilization can be divided into four periods or chapters: the Dark Ages (675-1075); Middle Ages (1075-1475); Modern (1475-1875); and from 1875 on, which Toynbee tentatively describes as Postmodern.

Yucatec

The Yucatec civilization was the offspring of the Mayan civilization. It arose after 629 A.D. on a desolate limestone shelf of the Yucatan peninsula and had to overcome the dry, treeless terrain. It also had the challenge of forming an identity distinct from the disintegrating Mayan civilization.Although its people were skilled in metallurgy, the Yucatec civilization never achieved the heights that the Mayan had; it was absorbed by the Mexic civilization in the twelfth century.

Themes

Laws of History

The basic premise of *A Study of History* is that civilizations emerge, grow, break down, and disintegrate according to a consistent, recurrent pattern. Since Toynbee believed that the universe was notchaotic but subject to laws, he argued that those laws must also be observable in human history.

Although *A Study of History* is a voluminous work, the basic outline of this pattern of laws operating in history is quite simple. A primitive society evolves into a civilization because it successfully responds to a challenge in either the physical or the human environment. This pattern of challenge and response continually recurs because each successfully met challenge generates another challenge, which demands another creative response, and so on. Employing terms taken from Chinese philosophy, Toynbee identifies this as a movement from the state of Yin (rest) to that of Yang (action) and declares it to be one of the fundamental rhythms of the universe.

The engines of societal growth are creative individuals and groups. They also obey a law, which Toynbee defines as withdrawal-and-return. They withdraw from society, whether literally or figuratively, and develop knowledge, wisdom, or power, and then return to society and bring the benefits of their labors to everyone. The majority then follows this creative minority in a process of mimesis, or imitation, and so the civilization advances. Toynbee points out that the law of withdrawal-and-return can be found not only in the human sphere but also in the annual withdrawal and return of agricultural crops. He also notes that the same law applies to human spiritual growth, especially in the Christian doctrine of resurrection. This is typical of the way Toynbee uses analogies from the natural world and from spheres of human activity other than the political to emphasize his point about recurring patterns and laws.

The breakdown of a civilization also follows predictable laws. It occurs when the creative minority is no longer able to meet a challenge successfully. The "internal proletariat" no longer sees any reason to follow it, and the "external proletariat" (those groups outside the civilization's formal borders who are influenced by developments within it) becomes hostile. Social disruption and wars follow, a stage that Toynbee calls a Time of Troubles. Out of the Time of Troubles emerges a conqueror, who imposes peace through a universal state, which is an attempt to reverse the decline. An example of a universal state, and one of the many models that Toynbee discusses, is the Roman Empire, which was born out of the disintegration phase of Helleniccivilization. But the universal state cannot permanently reverse the decline or avoid the eventual collapse of the civilization.

Everywhere Toynbee looks, he sees patterns, laws, rhythms, and cycles, not only in the broad rise and fall of civilizations, but in smaller details, too. For example, when analyzing modern Western history over the previous four hundred years, he discerns a

recurring pattern of four cycles, which he even puts in tabular form in chapter 11: first there is an "overture" in which minor wars serve as a prelude to what is to come; this is followed first by a "general war," then by a "breathing space" of relative peace, then by a "supplementary war" (which he calls the Epilogue), and finally by a "general peace." Toynbee states that similar patterns can be found in the Hellenic and Sinic civilizations.

Toynbee was aware that in developing the concept of laws of history he was going against the grain as far as the modern trend of historical study was concerned. He noted that many modern historians rejected the idea that history could be understood in terms of an orderly pattern based on the operation of discernible laws. He quoted an unidentified English novelist who, wishing to express the idea that history was merely a succession of meaningless events, coined the word "Odtaa," standing for "one damn thing after another." But Toynbee begged to differ.

One consequence of Toynbee's system is that, if accepted, it would make the entirety of human history intelligible. It would also mean that given the presence of recurring patterns, the historian would be in a position to offer predictions about the future course of human history, a task that Toynbee did indeed undertake, if somewhat reluctantly, in chapter 12 of *A Study of History*.

Religion

Writing in 1955, Toynbee stated, "Religion has come, once again, to take the central place in my picture of the Universe." This is made clear in chapter 7 of *A Study of History*. In earlier chapters, Toynbee takes the view that civilizations are the dominant element in history, and that the higher religions (Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism) are only by-products, coming into existence as the civilizations disintegrate. In chapter 7, he describes a new view. Rather than seeing religions in terms of civilizations, he now sees civilizations in terms of religions. According to this view, the whole purpose of civilization is to provide an opportunity for a higher religion to come into being. (By "higher religions" Toynbee means those religions that are universal, as opposed to the lower religions that are merely local and restricted to one tribe or parochial state.) A consequence of Toynbee's new perspective is that the breakdown and disintegration of a civilization does not mean that it has failed; on the contrary, it may have succeeded in its main task. Rather than being a by-product of a civilization that may have some other main purpose, religion is civilization's most valuable fruit.

Toynbee uses an analogy of the wheel to explicate his view further. He sees the rising and falling of civilizations like revolutions of a wheel, which "carry forward the vehicle which the wheel conveys." The vehicle conveyed by Toynbee's wheel is religion.

The same image helps Toynbee explain why the higher religions are born during the downward turns of the wheel, in periods of decline. He argues that this is necessary because there is a spiritual law according to which progress comes only through suffering. Low points in secular life may be high points in spiritual history.

Although he is steeped in the Christianity of his own civilization, Toynbee does not regard Christianity as the only route to spiritual enlightenment. He sees all the higher religions as having a role to play, particularly in the modern age in which global communications have facilitated an unprecedented level of contact between different faiths. He considers the possibility that in a forthcoming universal state that includes the whole world

the respective adherents of the four living higher religions might come to recognize that their once rival systems were so many alternate approaches to the One True God along avenues offering diverse partial glimpses of the Beatific Vision.

Toynbee even envisions the possibility that in the future, the diverse religions might come together and form a single church.

Style

Simile and Analogy

Toynbee frequently makes use of similes and analogies in which two apparently dissimilar things are compared. The purpose of these similes is to enable the reader to visualize the concept that is being presented and make it easier to grasp. One extended simile recurs at several points in the book, and that is Toynbee's comparison of civilizations to humans climbing a mountain. Primitive civilizations are like people lying asleep on a ledge with a precipice below and a precipice above. No further progress is possible for them. Arrested civilizations are like climbers who have reached a certain height but now find themselves blocked; they can go neither forward nor backward. Civilizations that are ready to grow, however, are like climbers who have just risen to their feet and are beginning to climb the face of the cliff. They cannot stop until they either fall back to the ledge or reach another, higher ledge.

In another extended simile, Toynbee compares the influence of a creative minority in a civilization to a physical beam of light that radiates outward. He calls this a "culture ray," in which the economic, political, and cultural aspects of a civilization radiate to those living outside its formal borders. His description of the process is an example of the poetic quality of much of Toynbee's prose:

The light shines as far as, in the nature of things, it can carry until it reaches its vanishing-point. The gradations are infinitesimal, and it is impossible to demarcate the line at which the last glimmer of twilight flickers out and leaves the heart of darkness in undivided possession.

Toynbee believes the culture ray to be a very powerful force because although civilizations are a comparatively recent development in human history, they have succeeded during that period in permeating, to a greater or lesser extent, virtually every primitive society.

A third extended simile is that of a dam. Toynbee uses this to illustrate the way a disintegrating civilization creates a military barrier to insulate itself from the alienated people outside its borders. The barrier acts like a physical dam. However, in the long run it is always breached. In chapter 8, Toynbee elaborates at great length and sophistication, in terms of his simile of the dam, on how this happens. The water that is piled up above the dam (the equivalent of the civilization's hostile external proletariat) seeks to find the same level as the water below it (the civilization), and it continually exerts pressure to that effect. Just as engineers construct safety valves in the form of sluices, so does the defending civilization attempt techniques that will keep its own "dam" from collapsing. One technique is to enlist some of their barbarian adversaries on their own side. But the safety valves fail because the forces outside the military barrier (the equivalent of the water above the dam) are forever on therise. When the barbarians

finally break through, the result, as with the bursting of a physical dam, is calamity all round.

Style

A Study of History has been compared to a mighty river, meandering along its course and gathering strength from many tributary streams. It might also be thought of as a great cathedral, in which every stone, every stained-glass window, and every historical monument in the interior help to create the final edifice that reveals the grandeur of humanity's spiritual aspiration. In constructing this imposing edifice, not only does Toynbee seem to know almost everything about so many different civilizations, his style of exposition is equally eclectic. In addition to the facts and historical research that are the tools of the historian's profession, he makes frequent use of mythology and world literature. He has an eye for the apt quotation that perfectly captures his idea, as when a passage from a poem by American poet Walt Whitman illustrates the Toynbee theory of a recurring rhythm of challenge and response through which a civilization grows: "It is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary." Shakespeare is employed to illustrate the idea that civilizations are destroyed not by outside forces but from within; Shakespeare is brought in again to illustrate the Toynbee law of "etherialization," in which the vital sphere of a growing civilization shifts from the external to the internal world. Goethe's poem *Faust* is used to illustrate the challenge and response pattern, and references to the Bible and classical myths are too numerous to detail. Toynbee uses this eclectic approach to his subject to capture a vital dimension of human history that may be unobtainable by a method that deals only with strict empirical facts.

Historical Context

Nationalism

The growth of nationalism was one of the most important developments in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western history. Toynbee disliked nationalism, regarding it as one of the besetting evils of the modern world. He believed it was the cause of war. He also believed that emphasis on the nation-state led to distorted versions of history. This was why he took civilizations rather than nations as the units of historical study. Toynbee also wanted to combat another dangerous modern tendency, that of Eurocentric or Western bias, which he called an "egocentric illusion." He did not view Western civilization as the apex of human development since this left no room for objective evaluation of civilizations originating in China and India, let alone South and Central American civilizations.

World Wars I and II

A Study of History was influenced by the times in which Toynbee lived. In 1920, Western civilization was facing the challenge of recovering after the devastation of World War I. It was in that year that Toynbee first conceived the idea that there might be uniform laws governing the rise and fall of civilizations. He noted striking parallels between the situation facing the West and the challenge faced by the Hellenic civilization following the Pelopponesian war in the fifth century B.C. This parallel between the two civilizations was the seed idea that led to the structure elaborated in *A Study of History*.

World War II also affected Toynbee's work. Volumes 4-6 of *A Study of History* were published the year the war broke out. Since they dealt for the most part with the breakdown and disintegration of civilizations, they were very timely.

Toynbee was unable to resume his work until 1947 because of the war. His views had been modified by the intervening events. Because of the destructive power of the newly created atomic bomb, he now possessed a more pessimistic view of the future prospects for Western and other civilizations. He also allocated a far more important place to the higher religions of the world than before.

The Cold War

When Toynbee was writing his final volumes, the Cold War between the United States and Russia, the two superpowers that had emerged after World War II, dominated the world. Toynbee gave considerable attention to this situation in chapter 12 of *A Study of History*. He noted that if a third world warshould break out, the result might be the annihilation of human life on Earth. He concluded that the only alternative was to move toward political unification of the world with control of nuclear weapons in the hands of one power. He did not see the United Nations as capable of fulfilling such a role.

Instead, it would have to be carried out by one of the two superpowers. Of these two powers, Toynbee held a more favorable view of the United States. Toynbee found the United States, with its history of federalism, more suited to assuming the principal position in a world government.

Population Growth

In the second half of the twentieth century, one of the major problems facing the world, Toynbee believed, was unchecked population growth. He pointed out that the population of China had doubled in the hundred years from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. India and Indonesia, two of the most populous countries in the world, showed a similar rate of population growth. Much of the growth was due to reduced infant and child mortality rates. Toynbee believed that if the trend continued, world population would outstrip the earth's capacity to feed everyone. Even the most sophisticated technology would not be able to prevent this. After all, Toynbee argued, the Earth's surface is finite; only so much food can be produced from it. The result of overpopulation would be famine unless a world government was formed to restrict the rights of humans to procreate. Toynbee acknowledged the many difficulties and tensions this loss of personal liberty would create.

Critical Overview

There were two markedly different reactions to *A Study of History*. The general public gave the book an enthusiastic reception, but academic historians were in general severely critical of Toynbee's work.

In 1947, when Somervell's abridgement of volumes 1-6 appeared, Toynbee won wide popular acclaim in the United States. E. D. Myers' review in the *Nation* was typical of the praise heaped on the book by nonspecialists. Myers commented that Toynbee's concepts and analysis were "of sufficient importance and excellence to merit serious study; his presentation is as 'entrancing' as Mr. Somervell suggests it is." Myers suggested that if readers had time to read only one book that year, they should select *A Study of History*.

Much of the American book-buying public felt the same way. The abridged version became a Book-of-the-Month club selection and a bestseller. In 1947 alone, over 129,000 copies were sold, and total sales in the next few years reached almost 250,000. Toynbee himself became a minor celebrity. He was invited to give a lecture series at Bryn Mawr College, and in March 1947, his photograph appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, which contained a lengthy and laudatory review of *A Study of History*. There were numerous discussions of the book in the press and on radio and television, and Toynbee was hailed as a prophet for the post-World War II era. In *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews*, published in 1956, M. F. Ashley Montagu commented that the book "constitutes one of the most famous and most widely discussed books of its time."

However, most professional historians did not share this exalted opinion of their colleague's work. In 1954, following the publication of volumes 7-10 of *A Study of History* (abridged by Somervell in 1957), there was a barrage of harsh criticism by historians. Prominent British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote in the *Sunday Times* (reprinted in *Toynbee and History*):

Not only are Professor Toynbee's basic assumptions often questionable, and his application of them often arbitrary, but his technical method turns out to be not 'empirical' at all. The theories are not deduced from the facts, not tested by them: the facts are selected, sometimes adjusted, to illustrate the theories, which themselves rest effortlessly on air.

Another distinguished British historian, A. J. P. Taylor, was equally dismissive of Toynbee's work. Declaring in London's *New Statesman* (reprinted in *Toynbee and History*) that the work was not what he understood history to be, Taylor commented:

Professor Toynbee's method is not that of scholarship, but of the lucky dip, with emphasis on the luck.... The events of the past can be made to prove anything if they are arranged in a suitable pattern; and Professor Toynbee has succeeded in forcing them into a scheme that was in his head from the beginning.

Other academic critics weighed in with similar criticisms, attacking Toynbee's methods and his conclusions. Some said the work was a failure, that Toynbee got his facts wrong and also mixed up his history with too much theology and metaphysics, trying to take on the mantle of prophet and religious moralist. Specialists in different fields of historyattempted to refute what Toynbee had written about their particular area of expertise.

There was similar criticism of Toynbee's work from academic historians in America, although Pitirim Sorotkin, an eminent sociologist wrote a more positive article that was published in *The Journal of Modern History* (and reprinted in *Toynbee and History*). Although he disputed Toynbee's fundamental idea that a civilization is a unified whole and argued that Toynbee's fitting of all civilizations into a pattern of genesis, growth, and decline was far too rigid, he still expressed the view that Toynbee's work was "one of the most significant works of our time in the field of historical synthesis."

It is customary for major works, of history or any other discipline, to undergo periodic reevalua-tion, and *A Study of History* has been no exception. In 1989, two books were published to celebrate the centenary of Toynbee's birth. In the essays collected in *Toynbee: Reappraisals*, it is clear that professional historians were now prepared to look more favorably on Toynbee's achievement. And in his biography *Toynbee: A Life*, William H. McNeill, himself a noted historian, made a persuasive casefor the positive reevaluation of Toynbee's work. It seems likely that, criticisms notwithstanding, *A Study of History* will endure, along with Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1918-1923), as one of the most learned and provocative works of historical analysis written in the twentieth century.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English. In this essay, he explores the eclectic methods that Toynbee employed in writing A Study of History, *including the use of mythology, Jungian psychology, and unusual personal experiences*.

The twentieth century was an age of increasing specialization in all fields of knowledge, a trend that remains with us today. Knowledge grows at a rapid pace, but what is lacking is a connecting link among different fields of knowledge. The physical scientist has little to say to the humanist scholar; the social scientist and the mathematician speak different languages; and so on. Even within disciplines, knowledge has become compartmentalized. A professor of, say, literature may spend his or her entire career developing expertise in one small area and may know little not only of other fields of knowledge but also of what his or her colleagues in the same department are teaching and researching.

These issues were central to Toynbee's purpose in writing *A Study of History*. He pointed out that a historian must do two things: study history in detail but also as a whole. There had to be a balance between general views and the accumulation of facts. Toynbee believed that during the twentieth century the balance had swung too far in the direction of specialized studies that gave no sense of the whole picture. His fellow historians could no longer see the forest for the trees. Toynbee's gigantic attempt to view the whole of history from a universal perspective therefore stood at odds with the trend of the time toward specialization. This accounts in part for the disdain with which professional historians have often viewed his work.

A consequence of Toynbee's approach to history was that he was far more eclectic in his methods than the contemporary rationalistic approach would permit. He decided that if he was going to survey the whole of civilization, he would also employ in his task the whole of the human mind□its imaginative, nonrational, artistic, and spiritual capabilities as well as its rational and scientific powers. This approach can be seen, first, in Toynbee's reliance, at crucial moments in his argument, on mythology; second, in his use of the psychological theories of Carl Jung; third, in his inclusion of personal experiences, some of which can only be described as mystical; and fourth, in his insistence that the purpose of history must ultimately be sought in a religious view of the universe.

Central to Toynbee's account of the genesis of civilizations is his law of challenge and response: a civilization is born when a society successfully overcomes a major challenge. Toynbee derived this law not from any scientific method but from mythology. He pointed to various stories of encounters between two superhuman personalities in which the actions of one are in response to a challenge posed by the other. The story he relied on most was Goethe's dramatic poem, *Faus*t, in which God, knowing that man is always too eager to fall back into a state of slumber and inertia, uses the Devil, in the form of Mephistopheles, to goad Faust into action. Mephistopheles wagers that he can give Faust delightful experiences that will satisfy him more than any man has ever been

satisfied. Faust takes on the bet, saying that he will never rest content, whatever the Devil offers him. If he should ever cease from striving for greater fulfillment, then the Devil will win the wager and can have his soul.

In the simile that Toynbee uses several times, Faust is like a climber on a cliff who is awakening from sleep and is about to seek the next ledge above. For Toynbee, this was the essential step in moving from the inactive state of Yin to the active state of Yang. He found the same message in another mythological work, Homer's *Odyssey*, in which many of the temptations that Odysseus faces are in situations where he is promised that he can rest eternally in a delightful paradise. But Odysseus knows that he must remain active and press on with his mission to return home.

Toynbee's belief that mythology could embody a truth that was beyond the reach of the rational mind was stimulated by his reading of Plato, who often used imaginative myths to explore the nature of reality. This ability to use both reason and imagination in a search for the truth was, to Toynbee, a sign of the "humility and the audacity of a great mind."

Toynbee's interest in mythology was shared by Jung, and it is not surprising that Toynbee incorporated a number of Jungian ideas in his work. In his search for knowledge of the totality of the psyche, Jung developed the concept of the collective unconscious, a universal pool of psychic energy that manifests in archetypal images and dreams. The existence of a collective unconscious also explains the phenomenon Jung described as synchronicity in which individuals or groups seem able to communicate with others with whom they are not in direct contact. Toynbee may have drawn on this concept when he explained how the culture of a civilization, in its disintegration phase, is transmitted to its external proletariat, the groups that live outside its boundaries: "A rain of psychic energy, generated by the civilization ... is wafted across a barrier." This concept of a society receiving and absorbing the influx of "alien psychic energy" seems to depend on what Jung, drawing on ancient philosophy, referred to in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* as "the sympathy of all things." It operates on a level much deeper than the explicit intermixing of ideas.

Jung also believed that the subconscious contained repressed psychic energies that exerted great, if hidden, power over human desires and actions. Toynbee noticed a social parallel to this repression of elements of the conscious mind into the subconscious. This is when the creative minority in a society loses touch with its creative impulse and deteriorates into a mere dominant minority, resulting in the creation of a proletariat. The effect is that a society that was formerly unified is now split into two parts, each of which is hostile to the other, just as conscious and subconscious elements of the mind are frequently at odds with each other.

As Kenneth Winetrout points out in *Arnold Toynbee*, Toynbee also developed a schematic interpretation of religion that drew on Jung's classification of four psychological types□thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition□and two psychological "attitudes," introversion and extraversion. The introverted thinking type corresponds to

Hinduism; introverted feeling, to Buddhism; extraverted thinking, to Islam; and extraverted feeling (love), to Christianity.

Some may find this too much of a broad generalization. However, the attempt to discover a consistent pattern in diverse phenomena, both inner and outer, is characteristic of Toynbee's habit of thought.

The third aspect of Toynbee's unconventional method of studying history is the influence of anumber of unusual personal experiences. He records in volume 10 of the unabridged *A Study of History* that on no fewer than six occasions he had found himself in direct personal communion with certain events in history as if those events that had happened hundreds or thousands of years ago were literally unfolding in front of his eyes. The experiences were triggered by viewing the scenes where those events took place. Toynbee then records yet another experience, even "stranger" (his word) than the others. It occurred not long after World War I. Toynbee was walking down a London street when he

found himself in communion, not just with this or that episode in History, but with all that had been, and was, and was to come. In that instant he was directly aware of the passage of History gently flowing through him in a mighty current, and of his own life welling like a wave in the flow of this vast tide.

One can only guess what this remarkable experience must have been like and what effect it had on Toynbee's later work. But mystical or not, it seems entirely in line with the thrust of *A Study of History*, in which Toynbee seeks to grasp the whole of history in a meaningful pattern and by doing so acquire insight into what the future might hold.

It is clear from this that Toynbee was no ordinary historian. Perhaps the essential nature of his work can be better grasped if he is viewed as an artist and *A Study of History* as a kind of prose epic. One reads Toynbee not so much for the facts, although there are plenty of those, but for the vision, the informing pattern, the unity in diversity that he discerns in the sweep of human history. In this respect, Toynbee's work resembles the work of another scholar in another field, Joseph Campbell. Campbell's *A Hero With a Thousand Faces*, published in 1949 as Toynbee was working on his final volumes, did for mythology what Toynbee did for history, identifying a single recurring pattern in all the diverse mythology of the world.

The fourth and final aspect of Toynbee's distinctive method as a historian was that he strived to see the unfolding of civilizations in terms not merely of humanity. He thought that to view history merely from a human perspective led to a dangerous worship of the creations of man. As a historian, he could not ignore the importance of the spiritual dimension. He believed that this was by far the most important angle of vision from which to study history. In fact, he declared that the whole purpose of the turning wheel of history was to bring forth spiritual truth. History gives "a vision of God's creation on the move"; creation travels from God, by way of history, back to God. The contribution of the historian is to point this out for others to contemplate.

Such a vision also formed part of Toynbee's own spiritual quest. Although later in his life he would describe himself as an agnostic, in volume 10 of *A Study of History*, in a passage that was not included in Somervell's abridgement, he looked forward to a fellowship with others through the grace of God, whose "presence and participation transfigure a precarious Brotherhood of Man into a Communion of Saints in which God's creatures are united with one another through their union with their Creator."

Toynbee expressed the same idea, in less high-flown language, when he wrote of his practical purpose as a historian. In his pamphlet, "How The Book Took Shape" (reprinted in *Toynbee and History*), he remarks that in a world in which nuclear annihilation is a possibility, there is one thing a historian can do:

He can help his fellow man of different civilizations to become more familiar with one another, and, in consequence, less afraid of one another and less hostile to one another, by helping them to understand and appreciate one another's histories and to see in these local and partial stories a common achievement and common possession of the whole human family. ... And it *is* one family; it always *has* been one family in the making.

To a fractious world that has still not learned what it needs to know, Toynbee's gentle words, all the more eloquent for their simplicity, bear repeating.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Thompson analyzes Toynbee 's theories and formulas and their application to Western society.

Most critics would agree that Toynbee's *Study of History* is a work of epic proportions. Several commentators have noted that Toynbee, as a historian who zealously recorded the many contrasting beats of history, himself injected a marked counterbeat into historical writing. Since 1910 few works have exceeded one volume; in literature the short story has been threatening the novel. In contrast, both the length and the temper of *A Study of History* are exceptions to the prevailing ethos. Toynbee consciously struck a blow against the fashionable specialized and "scientific" studies which isolate tiny fragments of experience for the most intensive study. His chief foe, however, was not the discrete use of scientific techniques but rather the idolatry of that method and the ready acceptance of the superficial philosophy of "scientism" with its easy optimism and materialism. His method, in its turn, must be critically assessed, for the boldness of his approach makes it inevitable that certain questions and criticisms should be raised. The first person to anticipate this would have been Toynbee himself, who observed at the time he was launching his major work: "In the world of scholarship, to give and take criticism is all in the day's work and, each in our day, we may criticize our predecessors without becoming guilty of presumption so long as we are able to look forward without rancour to being criticized in our turn by our successors when our day is past."

All historians, including those who construct theories of universal history, have their special competence. Toynbee's was Graeco-Roman history. Its lands and people were so familiar to him as to make them his second "homeland." However, it is exactly his attachment to Hellenic history which causes readers some uneasiness about the pattern of world history he discovered. His conceptual scheme was suspiciously well tailored to the decline and fall of one civilization but it hung rather awkwardly on the twenty-odd others. It is apparent from even a cursory reading that Hellenic civilization had its "Time of Troubles," "Universal State," and "Universal Church" in relentless and seemingly preordained succession. This pattern was more difficult to maintain when Toynbee discussed other civilizations. He was obliged to confess that Egyptiac history comprised one kind of exception (for itsuniversal state was revived after it had run its normal course), Arabic civilization was another exception, and other civilizations were in other ways exceptions too.

When a reader attempts to apply the conceptual scheme derived principally from Hellenic civilization to, for example, Western civilization, Toynbee's problem at once becomes clear. In a table designed to portray the stages in history of the various civilizations, the "Time of Troubles" for Western civilization was charted as having occurred between 1378 and 1797. Elsewhere in the *Study*, Toynbee was more cautious, leaving the impression that although many symptoms of decay may be present, one must wait and see before conceding this decline. If growth and disintegration are as clear-cut as was elsewhere implied, it is curious that the stage in history at which the West finds itself should remain so beclouded for Toynbee.

Furthermore, critics point to flaws in Toynbee's pattern of history which are distinct from the problem of its concrete application to contemporary civilizations. The basic concept in his schema is *civilization*, and yet he never defined by more than a few illustrations precisely what he meant by this term or how it could be distinguished from society. As the analysis proceeded he nevertheless talked about these units as if he were using them with all the precision of a zoologist. Yet the species *civilization* appears to be used interchangeably with the generic category society. Most of his definitions are literary rather than scientific, and much of his terminology has that breadth and vagueness which generally characterizes spiritual interpretations of history. For example, in his treatment of the withdrawal and return of creative leaders who inspired growth in civilization, the reader must somehow divine the precise common denominator for theexperiences of some thirty individuals. If Toynbee had used Buddha, Caesar, Peter the Great, Kant, and Lenin to point up an interesting parallel, this flaw would not be particularly significant. When he used their experiences to establish scientific formulas and laws, the practice may legitimately be questioned. Indeed, his discussion is curiously marred by the unequal attention given the various personalities and minorities responsible for civilizational growth. In some cases, Toynbee presented shortened life histories of the creative leaders, and the data while interesting often have little to do with the point at issue. At other times, he allowed a paragraph or two to suffice. This difference in treatment can hardly be based upon any systematic principle. Moreover, it is difficult to appreciate the similarity he detected between the quiet habits of Kant, whose thoughts, to be sure, made an impact throughout the world, and the withdrawal and return of Peter the Great, who returned to Russia from Europe with new ideas which he personally put into practice.

This concept is also obscure in Toynbee's discussion of particular creative nations. The notion that England withdrew from the Continent between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, only to return as the center of world trade and world power in the nineteenth century, has more meaning as a description of the general foundations of British foreign policy than as an exact statement of historical fact. That is, British policy was based upon England's relative insularity, but this hardly constituted withdrawal. If it is farfetched to assume that a nation even in the sixteenth century could withdraw from relations with others, it is no less extravagant to imagine that other nations in the thick of European power politics would be incapable of making a creative contribution. Any theory which excluded seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France as a creative force would hardly receive support. Yet it would also be erroneous to ignore the fact that the concept of Withdrawal and Return, whether because or in spite of its utter intangibility, illuminates some of the shadowy corners of history which scientific studies have left untouched. However, Toynbee's overly ambitious claims invite critical responses by some honest observers.

Another principle or law which is so indefinite that almost any historical episode can be molded to fit its broad outlines is Challenge and Response. Spiritual and scientific interpretations of history have consistently asked, What is the true mechanism of history? For some, such as Hegel and Marx, it is a particular dialectic or process. Others have found the mechanism in economic conditions or geographical factors. Toynbee's formula is more difficult to verify objectively and more likely to encompass a

wider range of events. Between an environment that is too severe and one that is too easy, there is a "golden mean" where civilization can flourish. In general, the basis for this optimum condition is a favorable climate and adequate land and natural resources.

Scientific historians would object that this concept is too simple. New nations and societies have achieved their positions in history because of such rudimentary factors and because the whole context of their historical experience was favorable. The American colonies were blessed with a broad continent with resources of unparalleled variety and richness. This privileged position, however, was only one fragment of the larger historical development in which factors such as outside assistance and unexpected freedom from colonial domination were also involved. There is some question whether Toynbee's formula of challenge and response is sufficiently broad to encompass these various factors and concrete enough to permit their separate consideration. In the eyes of most modern scientific historians, every historic event is a separate entity and therefore so infinitely complex that an observer can evaluate it only in terms of its concreteness. Only by patient research and painstaking scrutiny can such an event be clearly illuminated.

There is a final assumption to which modern historians would probably take exception. Toynbee postulated that civilizations break down and decay because elements within them are inherently self-destructive. Yet the early American civilizations, particularly those of the Incas and Aztecs, were destroyed by external forces. But a spiritual interpretation of history could hardly concede such a point. So *A Study of History* maintained that these civilizations had already succumbed to the most profound internal malaise before they were invaded and conquered by Spanish adventurers. It is of course likely that societies have been weakened by internal dissension and decay before falling prey to a more powerful foe. It seems naïve to imagine, however, that history does not offer numerous cases of brute force triumphing over weakness and virtue. This has surely been the fate of small nations throughout history. It would be surprising indeed if the same were not true of civilizations such as the early American ones. Toynbee's assumption of transcendent spiritual factors in history makes itdifficult if not impossible for him to accept the primacy of force and power as the cause of death for a civilization. His "Time of Troubles" explanation indirectly assumes that the successful conqueror has not himself suffered the same self-inflicted blow and is therefore morally and politically superior. If pursued to its logical conclusion, this principle would mean that in all important respects a conquering invader would surpass his victim. Any list of victorious conquerors shows how fantastic this assumption is. It symbolizes the great weakness in those spiritual versions of history which too complacently identify virtue and power. It reflects the tragic paradox of our times that in Western civilization with the breakdown of common moral standards even the spiritual historian becomes a utopian of power. He finds ways of justifying the proposition that might makes right.

Furthermore, the dilemma which confounds students of human affairs is reflected in the dual problem with which Toynbee grappled. In seeking to establish general principles and laws of history, he chose as his subject great civilizations and found over twenty separate examples. Thus a student of history has the same kind of individual facts with

which the physical sciences have traditionally dealt. Civilizations are "affiliated" and "apparented," but this very concept may have served to obscure the empirical unity of history. Particular cultures are interrelated in complex ways, and only in the last volumes of the *Study* did Toynbee demonstrate the degree to which he plumbed the profound and mysterious relations between various societies in history.

Although Toynbee called upon this physical-sciences analogy, he at the same time abandoned a practice central to all scientific pursuits. The criticism leveled most frequently against him has been that his "well-beloved empiricism" is in fact no empiricism at all. He selected his data and imper-turbably used them to build a system. But each datum can be used in a variety of ways, and Toynbee may not always have cited those facts which would not support his principal theses. However valid this criticism may be for Toynbee's empiricism in particular, it is unerringly true with respect to empiricism in general. The cauldron of history is so immense that the individual historian can serve up but a spoonful, and whether this can represent the whole is always doubtful. The limits of Toynbee's history are those of his subject matter. The infinite variety of history is the chief factor which creates the eternal boundaries within which any student must formulate his principles.

There is a further standard by which *A Study of History* can be judged. In sheer erudition and learning, the work is breathtaking and matchless. It is more wide-ranging than Spengler's masterpiece, and its pages literally teem with brilliant passages and flashes of insight. One section includes an extensive account of the history of warfare; another describes the colonization of North America. His accounts of the history of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe and Spain, of the Spartan form of society, and of the Ottoman slave-court illustrate the amplitude of historical experience to which the reader is introduced. Even if one finds that some of Toynbee's main theses are untenable, only the most uninspired of readers would be unable to gain new perspectives on the world. The value of Toynbee's work does not depend on the acceptance of each of its parts as if it were a Euclidean demonstration. It is so rich in historical allusions that the study of its pages has a value independent of full agreement with its assumptions and conclusions.

As a philosopher of history, Toynbee himself held up a warning to all historians and political scientists. He steadfastly maintained the proposition that history in general is unpredictable. The soundest estimates will be confounded by elements of chance and contingency. No one can say in advance how leading participants in the historical drama will act and few have prophesied accurately the more far-reaching events in history. Some think the gradual elimination of this uncertainty will occur when the specialized social sciences delve more carefully into the wellsprings of human behavior. Toynbee affirmed his confidence in the use of some of these techniques, particularly social psychology and statistics. It would be stretching a point, however, to imply that he shared the cheerful and extravagant expectations of some social scientists about the elimination of chance in discoveries that are possible through the use of rigorous social surveys.

In talking about the growth and decay of civilizations, Toynbee necessarily wrote social history. This is particularly the case in *A Study of History*, for the fundamental criterion by which growth is measured is not geographical expansion but, more unusual, self-determination. It is obvious that a society which turns inward in this way must face up to its social problems. Therefore one finds in the *Study* a large number of rich insights into social ills and social institutions.

Sociologists as a group have laid great stress on case studies, maintaining that a student must first get inside a particular society and appraise it on its own terms. A prominent American social theorist has held that the only clear "case study" in Toynbee's writing is his analysis of Hellenic civilization. Even the staunchest admirer of Toynbee must confess that sometimes the social data hardly provide a clear picture of the uniqueness of a particular community. It is probably fair to say that Toynbee made little or no contribution to the cultural "case study" method as interpreted by modern sociology.

He has, however, provided empirical sociologists with a series of fertile hypotheses which remain to be tested and verified. His theory of challenge and response is of this order. Some of his formulas, however, have already been analyzed more fully, among them his theory of cultural diffusion or radiation wherein a society that has accepted a certain aspect of an alien culture must subsequently acquire all others. Moreover, as early as the turn of the century, modern sociology considered the social phenomenon of imitation, for which Toynbee has constructed his theory of mimesis. One of the social classics anticipated *A Study of History* on this point by nearly half a century: "A society is a group of people who display many resemblances produced either by imitation or by *counter-imitation*. For men often counter-imitate one another, particularly when they have neither the modesty to imitate directly nor the power to invent." There are fewer allusions to the findings of modern sociology in Toynbee's great work than there are to comparable studies in political science and history. Yet it is significant that great social theorists such as Merton have found a community of interest with Toynbee.

The major difference between Toynbee and contemporary sociologists is his individualistic interpretation of social change. Toynbee ascribed to great personalities and leaders what sociologists would insist, through more extensive analysis and study, could be attributed to underlying social forces. Research and new theoretical tools may yield the causes of fundamental change in man's social relations and institutions. The neophyte in sociology may be tempted to dissent vigorously from its obsessions with classification, from its sometimes pedantic distinctions between *society* and *community* or between subtypes of sacred and secular societies; he may likewise disagree with Toynbee's extreme individualism. On this point, nonetheless, the paths of the historian and his contemporaries in sociology and anthropology sharply and probably irrevocably diverge.

Students of contemporary religion have been at least as critical of some of Toynbee's views as have scholars in the social sciences. It is most unlikely that philosophers and specialists in comparative religion would accept the strong currents of Christian determinism which emerge in his general conclusion that Christianity is the culmination

of religious history. Indeed, by abandoning the neutrality about religions which he maintained throughout earlier accounts, Toynbee invited the unanimous criticism of all relativists in philosophy and religion.

Within religious circles, moreover, particularly among traditionalists, one would expect further differences of opinion on many of the points Toynbee raised. He stated, for example, that religious progress occurred during the breakdown and decay of civilizations. It is historically accurate to say that periods of decay have frequently been marked by profound religious insight. In times of crisis, the idolatrous worship of governments and social institutions has frequently been supplanted by new faiths or old religions. It is far less certain that in all of history, the progress of religion has been an inevitable concomitant of cultural disintegration. One exception is the growth of religious indifference in the past four centuries, during what may prove to be our own "Time of Troubles." Further, it might well be argued that there has been a tendency for religions to identify so closely with historic civilizations that the destruction of one has meant that the other would likewise perish. Toynbee is right if in ideal terms religions prove able to stand apart from their native societies and in times of catastrophe display the courage of interpreting these tragedies as judgments by God. One looks in vain in the New Testament, however, for a concept of religion mounting to higher dimensions of insight through impending societal breakdowns and destruction. On the stage of human experience, there is always a chance that evil will triumph over the good and an eternal peril that religion itself will be destroyed. From this standpoint, the latter-day revisions of Toynbee's morphology of history may be subject to criticism and possible emendation.

Toynbee also tended to identify religion too completely with a particular ecclesiastical institution. It is not everywhere clear what he meant by his frequent references to the "Church"—sometimes it was the Roman Catholic, elsewhere the Greek Orthodox, and occasionally the Church of England. In general, his hopes for the future were related to the revival of a universal Roman Catholic church under a modern Hildebrand. Thus, the greatest of all questions to be answered in the twentieth century is, "Can Hildebrand arise again in his might to heal the wounds inflicted upon the souls of his flock by the sins of a Rodrigo Borgia and a Sinibaldo Fieschi?" There is a curious naïveté to his statement that although "the Church may actually never yet have expressed Christianity to perfection, there is at least no inherent impediment here to the attainment of a perfect harmony." Elsewhere he seemed acutely aware that all institutions are likely, through domination by hierarchies of leaders, to become closed corporations in which there can be little progress. In general, Toynbee tended to overvalue the virtues of ecclesiasticism and to treat cavalierly the whole tradition of Protestantism. It is one thing to deal realistically with the implications of religious uni-versalism for international affairs. It is something else again to draw further conclusions about the intrinsic merits of religions on that basis. In his emphasis on the primacy of institutional religion, Toynbee surely parted company with Bergson and Augustine.

For the analysis and study of religion, however, Toynbee's contribution is of greatest significance. He identified the particular religions which have been important in various civilizations. He discussed their influence and shortcomings with great insight and unquestioned familiarity. That a secular historian should pay such heed to the religious

theme in history has been one of the momentous factors influencing the role of religion in the mid-twentieth century.

More than the majority of historians, Toynbee wrote about political events and trends from the viewpoint of political science. In numerous ways, this approach was apparent in estimates of political developments in England and the United States, in analysis of the influence of forms of government upon international politics, and in discussions of political power. But the issues Toynbee spoke of most frequently and on which he propounded formal theories are the nature of political leadership and the nature of the modern state. Each theory carries important implications for democratic theory and practice in the West.

In one view, the leader is merely an expression of prevailing customs or ideas in any society. He is thus an agent for that commonalty and can act only upon its mandate. Toynbee assumed, however, that it is primarily through the energy of the successful creative leader that a society moves forward. Moreover, the bonds of community between him and his followers are so fragile that only through imitation and "social drill" can they respond to his program.

The question one must ask is whether Toynbee's conception leads directly to antidemocratic politics. It is important to observe here that the fundamental assumption upon which a theory of creative leadership is based is not inconsistent with some of the findings of contemporary scholarship in political science and sociology. There is an inherent tendency, we have discovered, for "elitist groups" to ascend to power in both autocratic and democratic governments. The role of the "charismatic" leader is central in this process. The great personality or hero in Toynbee's scheme must first convince the people of his intrinsic worth as a leader before his creative program will be given a try. This would hardly be true for governments which were tyrannies or depotisms, although modern totalitarianism may present a somewhat different case.

On this count, Toynbee's thesis is unqualifiedly democratic, for the great mass of uncreative followers retain the right to accept or reject the leader who is appealing to them. On other grounds, however, there are reasons for some uncertainty. Once a leader who has risen to power has lost his creativity, machinery must be in place to make possible his removal and to assure succession. On this crucial point, Toynbee's references to revolution are inconclusive. Moreover, the system of popular elections, the principal means for disposing of unsatisfactory leaders, is not referred to at any point. If we conceive of Toynbee's theory of political leadership as a detailed account of the political process, then this omission becomes so serious that we may classify his views as antidemocratic. If, on the other hand, we appraise it as a fragment of a broad theory of history, then some qualifications are necessary. In general, spiritual interpretations have tended to accent the importance of struggle, which has often obscured their insight into the indirect channels by which these contests are resolved. If one assumes that the most profound human experiences are a monopoly of the few, it is difficult to build on this foundation a steadfastly democratic philosophy. Yet political leadership, for most moderns, remains little less than an "enigma wrapped in a riddle." Itis symbolic of this

dilemma that Toynbee should join an intensely individualistic social philosophy with a theory of political leadership which has aristocratic overtones.

Toynbee's view of the state is that of a contemporary English Liberal. In his view, political units in both socialist and free enterprise states have been moving, through trial and error, toward a common set of functions. The major problem in interpreting the role of the state is to bring the discussion to the level of practical experience. If it were possible to find some palliative for the enormity of recurrent wars, then states everywhere could act in many more ways to promote the general welfare. It may be said that Toynbee's conception of political problems is hardly that of a systematic political theorist. To a surprising number of perplexing issues, however, he brings the fresh and creative outlook of a thinker whose intuition has exceeded his ability to formulate general principles and theories.

We have been primarily concerned with Toynbee's theory of international politics. If the scheme he devised for interpreting and evaluating all history moved through successive stages, it is even more true that his concept of international politics was evolutionary. Indeed, his whole outlook on the forces and principles of international affairs was painfully and slowly harmonized with reality.

Toynbee was, in both religion and politics, originally a staunch idealist. His thinking about foreign policy and diplomacy was imprisoned within a crusading nationalism. Sometime during the 1930s, the decade of unparalleled catastrophe, however, he began to employ the tools and principles that four hundred years of modern diplomacy have taught. For an absolutist in religious matters, this shift to relativism in politics could not have been easy. He sometimes seized upon new instruments for peace and order as enthusiastically as he had taken to simple formulas.

Thus in the early stages of the experiment with collective security, Toynbee was convinced that this "new dispensation" had taken the place of the old balance of power. The particular problems of collective security with which he was forced to deal concretely were probably what carried him toward political realism. The pathos of these experiences liberated his theory from its earlier utopian fetters. This tendency in his thinking reached its culmination in the counsel he offered for the mitigation of the perilous struggle between East and West since World War II. In time of greatest crisis, no rational student of international politics could afford to ignore the lessons of diplomatic history. Toynbee turned to traditional diplomacy and its well-tested procedures and techniques because he properly identified that struggle as a worldwide political contest.

Moreover, in practice, Toynbee's viewpoint was eclectic. He was able to distinguish between immediate and ultimate objectives. The former can be pursued as practical alternatives; the latter must be conceived as long-range aims which can be achieved only by prudent choices among competing principles. What is striking about Toynbee's theory is that on most fundamental issues he succeeded in maintaining one set of interests without sacrificing the other. Since 1947 he steered the perilous course between a cynical realism and the fatuous assumptions of utopianism. In the 1930s, he

was not always able to find this channel but at the height of the cold war when the highest political wisdom is called for, he adjusted his theory to current problems.

Whether the most prudent political insight can carry Western civilization beyond the reach of ultimate destruction is something about which Toynbee was none too sanguine. All he would say was that in the task which confronts Western society and against the catastrophes of internecine warfare, our best hope was in bargaining for time. Toynbee's theory of international politics was transformed because modern society must try to avert its doom. In this common enterprise, the historian of great civilizations and the student of unrelenting struggles for political power offered the same counsel.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, McNeill discusses how the great range and eclectic nature of A Study of History *make uncovering consistent and unified themes in the work difficult*.

There are at least three points of view from which the worth of a book of history may be assessed. One may ask whether the book is accurate, that is, whether it deals fairly and skillfully with the data upon which it is based. Secondly, one may turn the historian's characteristic tools back upon himself and ask: How did this book come to be written? What is its relation to the individual life of the author, and more particularly, what is its relation to the age in which he lived? And, thirdly, one may ask what basic ideas, assumptions, or intellectual methods may underlie the text, governing its scope and proportion, shaping its emphasis, and giving a sort of artistic or intellectual unity to the whole.

When, however, we attempt to focus upon a book so vast and various as Toynbee's *A Study of History* from any of these viewpoints, difficulties at once arise. His basic ideas seem to have shifted radically during the thirty-odd years he spent producing the ten volumes, so that many discrepancies between the earliest and latest volumes may be found. Moreover, our times are too much with us to make it possible to see his book clearly in relation to the currents of thought and feeling that still run among us. We cannot say which of the many contradictory strands will predominate or seem most significant to later generations. Finally, the scope of his inquiries is so wide, and his erudition so various that the job of checking up on his accuracy must be resigned to experts in one or another of the fields of history with which he deals. Yet this is in some degree unjust, for errors of fact or judgment, which may seem monstrous to the narrow expert, need not necessarily invalidate the book as a whole. If we listen only to indignant specialists, the real greatness of the *Study* (which must surely lie in the effort to reduce all the multifariousness of human history to a comprehensible order) may quite escape us.

Indeed, on this point I venture the opinion, absurd though it may seem, that even if all but a few fragments of Toynbee's text should prove vulnerable to attack on the ground of factual inaccuracy, still the book will stand in the public eye, and also I believe in the judgment of posterity, as a notable monument of our century's intellectual history. Quite apart from the impression his ideas have made upon the general lay public□and this in itself becomes an incident in the intellectual history of our times□Toynbee has presented the community of academic and professional historians with an important challenge. It may or may not be taken up seriously by future generations; and the long-term influence of his book will in part depend upon the reaction we and our successors make to the challenge he has set before us.

The nature of Toynbee's challenge is twofold. First, he has boldly overridden the conventional boundaries between specialisms in the field of history. Taking all the knowable human past as his province, he has found rhythms and patterns whichany less panoramic view could scarcely have detected. I am, for myself, profoundly

convinced that there are insights attainable by taking large views of the past which cannot be had from close inspection of the separated segments of history. I once had an experience in New York City which for me has come to stand as a symbol of the advantage which may accrue to a man taking such an intellectual position. Once on a hot summer's evening when I was walking on Morningside Heights looking down upon the Hudson, the traffic on the Parkway beneath caught my attention. It was heavy, and to my surprise I saw that the cars were grouped along that ribbon of concrete in the alternating nodes and antinodes of a longitudinal wave, precisely like the diagram I remembered from my physics textbook illustrating the propagation of a sound wave. Moreover, the waves of traffic moved along the Parkway at a rate considerably faster than the progress of any car and were regular in length as well as in their speed. Here was a truth about stop-and-go driving on a crowded road which I had never known before, even though I had more than once been a particle in such a jam. Only the long perspective of Morningside Heights permitted me to apprehend this aspect of the phenomenon. Observers closer to the roadside might see individual cars going by; might calculatetheir speed or tabulate their makes, study the varieties of hubcaps or measure the pollution of the air from the exhausts; but from the very proximity of their vantage points our imaginary observers could have understood the wave-character of the traffic only through exact and painstaking statistical analysis of a sort usually impossible in historical study from lack of sufficient data. Yet a Toynbee-like vision of universal history, I believe, opens the possibility of short-circuiting statistical methods, as my glance from Morningside Heights could do. New insights may arise with breadth of view; fallible and never completely provable perhaps, yet enormously stimulating to exact and careful study which may find new questions to ask of familiar data in the light of general ideas generated by men like Toynbee. No multiplication of specialisms or narrowing down of fields of history in the interest of more perfect accuracy can by itself hope to achieve such an enrichment of our understanding of man's past. Interaction between large views, bold hypotheses, fallible intuitions, and exact, detailed scholarship is what we need. If we concentrate upon the latter alone, by drawing ever closer to the facts and seeing details ever more completely, we may blind ourselves to other aspects of reality. We may, in the terms of my parable, see only the hubcaps and radiator grilles in the parade of traffic and miss the waves entirely.

This, then, is the first great challenge which Toynbee's *A Study of History* has put before us. It is a real challenge; for most academic historians, because they have made accuracy their major concern, have shrunk from universal history. After all, no man, not even a man as gifted as Toynbee, can hope to have more than a superficial acquaintance with all the fields of history; and until Toynbee came along, the English-speaking world had, for at least two generations, left universal history to brilliant amateurs like H. G. Wells, or, in this country, to the writers of undergraduate textbooks, whose efforts were directed not so much to new synthesis as to the cataloguing of more or less well-assorted information culled from the work of specialists.

The second great challenge Toynbee has put before us is similar in that it constitutes a breakthrough of the traditional limits of our discipline, not horizontally, so to speak, but vertically. What I mean is this: Toynbee has felt himself free to connect his studies of history with ultimate philosophical and theological questions. His study of the human

past has confronted him with such questions as: What is the destiny of mankind? What laws are human societies subject to? What part does God play in human affairs? Perhaps because we wished to be scientific, and were temperamentally cautious, professional historians have tended to skirt these major riddles of the human condition; but Toynbee has boldly rushed in where we have feared to tread and come up with his own individual answers. Quite apart from the question whether they are good answers or not, answers are there in his book; and I believe that much of his popularity arises from the explicitness with which he has confronted these ultimate questions which haunt, and have always haunted, the minds of reflective men.

We all know the enrichment which came to the traditions of political history when men began to delve into economic aspects of the past; and Toynbee, it seems to me, offers a similar enrichment by challenging us to bring our historical truths into relation with sociological, philosophical, and theological theories and beliefs.

Yet in attempting so grandiose a synthesis, accuracy of fact and accuracy of detailed interpretation inevitably suffer. Omniscience is beyond mankind, and in proportion as one ideal of history is emphasized another must be crowded into the shadows. This is, no doubt, the case with Toynbee, who, in undertaking to say something about everything, has laid himself open to expert criticism over and over again. Yet criticism directed merely toward correctness will miss the heart of his book, disguise its importance, and can do little to explain (or to destroy) its significance for our age in general and for professional historians in particular.

Let me leave the matter of Toynbee's accuracy at that. However mistaken or wrong-headed he may be on particular points, the *Study* still stands before us, grand and imposing.

Perhaps we can hope to come nearer to an understanding of his significance by taking up the second critical standpoint, asking ourselves: How did this book come to be written? What is its relation to Toynbee's and our own time?

Two preliminary observations are perhaps worth making in this connection. First, the scope and content of *A Study of History* is dependent on the work done by archaeologists, much of it within the present century. If the goodly company of the archaeologists had not discovered and studied Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Minoan, Mycenaean, Hittite, Indus, Shang, and Mayan civilizations, Toynbee could not have conceived history as he did. In this most elementary sense, his book is a product of our age. Secondly, the great popular reception his ideas have met in this country□a reception far warmer than they have had in England, or in any other country so far as I know□is undoubtedly connected with an easy inference to be made from his pattern of the development of civilizations. If the Western world is now becoming ripe for the emergence of a universal state, as his pages seem to suggest, the United States is clearly a contender for the role once played by Rome. Such a role flatters the national ego. If this is to become the American century, it is, to say the least, comforting to know the historical inevitability thereof in advance. In some influential quarters Toynbee's

ideas were, I believe, so interpreted, and the publicity his books received depended in some measure upon this fact.

But these observations merely skirt the question of the relation between *A Study of History* and our times. Fortunately, Toynbee has himself given a reasonably clear account of how he first conceived the germ of the *Study*. In 1914, soon after the First World War broke upon an unsuspecting Europe, Toynbee, in the course of his academic duties as a young Oxford don, found the pages of Thucydides pregnant with new meanings, and applicable, with surprising precision, to the contemporary struggle in Europe. In Toynbee's own words:

... suddenly my understanding was illuminated. The experience that we were having in our world now had been experienced by Thucydides in his world already ... Thucydides, it now appeared, had been over this ground before. He and his generation had been ahead of me and mine in the stage of historical experience we had respectively reached; ... Whatever chronology might say, Thucydides' world and my world had now proved to be philosophically contemporary. And, if this were the true relation between the Graeco-Roman and the Western civilizations, might not the relation between all the civilizations known to us turn out to be the same?

A sudden flash of insight, then, communicated from the pages of Thucydides in a time when the familiar landmarks of European civilization seemed about to collapse, raised a tantalizing question in Toynbee's mind; and as soon as the pressure of war duties in the British Foreign Office was removed, he set out to try to find an answer. If it were true that European historical development in the twentieth century A.D. was in some sense running parallel to the historical development of the Greek city-states of the fifth century B.C., was this mere accident, or part of a larger parallelism between the whole life course of the two civilizations? And could similar parallels be discovered in the histories of other peoples? Was there, in short, a sort of plot or rhythm common to human civilizations?

As we all know, Toynbee's investigations gave affirmative answers to these questions. As early as 1921 he was able to jot down a draft outline of the work we know as *A Study of History*, and during the next eight years he worked out details and prepared notes to flesh out that preliminary outline.

During these germinative years, and down until 1933 when work on the first three volumes was completed, Toynbee remained strongly under the spell of the classical education he had received in school and at Oxford. This shows through quite clearly in the first three volumes, where he regularly used the history of the Greco-Roman world as the archetype and measuring rod against which to plot the careers of other civilizations. Indeed, the method he used to identify his separate civilizations was to search for analogues of the three leading phenomena which accompanied the decay of the ancient classical world□a universal state, a universal church, and barbarian invasions; and when some parallels to these phenomena were discovered, he was prepared to recognize the death of an older and the birth of a new civilization.

There is, here a certain ambiguity in Toynbee's thought□or so it seems to me. He never gives a systematic, careful definition of what the term "civilization " means, but in later passages refers to it as a "state of the soul." Yet his criteria for recognizing separate civilizations are political, and as his book unfolds one discovers that the breakdowns of civilizations occur on the political plane also. I do not think Toynbee contradicts himself by such a procedure, for he could plausibly enough assert that the gross political manifestations which he used to discover the major outlines of the careers of civilizations were no more than outward and easily discovered manifestations of the state of the souls of the millions of men concerned with each civilization. Yet he has not spelled out what he means by his central concept of a civilization, and in his first three volumes he sometimes gives the impression that the political framework is at least for practical purposes identical with the civilization itself.

Such an emphasis upon politics is thoroughly in the tradition of classical thought; and there is still another sense in which his early inspiration derived from the ancients. From at least the time of Plato it had been a commonplace of Greek and Roman literature to hold that history moved in cycles. In its extreme form, as in the fourth of Vergil's *Eclogues*, this theory asserted that identical acts would recur time and again as the Great Year rolled round anew; in less fantastic form, men like Plato and Polybius held that constitutions underwent a regular cycle of change, rising toward an apex and then inevitably undergoing decay and eventual dissolution until the cycle began once more. Toynbee's view of the life pattern of civilizations, as advanced in his early volumes, was nothing but a translation of this classical commonplace onto a larger scene, substituting civilizations for the constitutions of city-states, and the globe, as known to contemporary Western historians, for the Mediterranean world of Plato and Polybius.

Yet however deeply Toynbee's mind in his early manhood was imbued with Greek and Roman literature, it remained true that, like Western civilization itself, his precocious childhood had been even more profoundly affected by exposure to an intense, evangelical Christianity, which gave him an abiding familiarity with the King James Bible. In the later 1930's when the progress of public events cast the long shadow of the Second World War upon the scene, and when personal problems also distressed him deeply, Toynbee's classicism began to wear thin. By degrees Toynbee the Hellenist gave way to Toynbee the man of religion, not quite Christian perhaps, since the creeds and formalism of organized Christianity repelled his mind. But still his new frame of mind may, I think, fairly be described as an enriched and sophisticated version of the Christianity of his childhood. One can see the beginning of this transformation in the middle group of his volumes, published on the eve of World War II, and the change in outlook became explicit and complete in the four concluding volumes published in 1954.

This gradual conversion was Toynbee's personal response o the challenge of personal sorrow and public disaster. The phrase from Aeschylus's *Agamemnon, "pathei mathos"* (learning through suffering), which had echoed in his mind even in his most Hellenized years, came to have an ever growing significance for his view of the history and destiny of mankind. For through suffering, he came to believe, specially gifted men might attain a sensitivity, otherwise beyond their powers, to the divine reality behind mundane appearances; and, as teachers and prophets, could share their enhanced vision of the

nature and purposes of God with their fellow men, whose minds had been readied for the reception of their message by the same suffering.

From this point of view, the cyclical rise and fall of civilizations came to have a new meaning. In his earlier, Hellenizing years, the recurrent breakdown and dissolution of civilizations had stood as a self-contained tragedy, attesting the limitations of human powers and the blindness of human passions. The consolation of history, as he then apprehended it, was a sort of Stoic heroism in the face of foreknown disaster. The three quotations which he prefixed to his first volumes: "Work ... while it is day ..."; "Nox ruit, Aenea ..."; and "Thought shall be the harder, Heart the keener, Mood shall be the more, As our might lessens," accurately catch the tone of his mind, deeply affected as it then was by the war of 1914-1918.

But from his new standpoint of the later 1930' s and after, this resigned pagan heroism began to seem mere blindness to the most basic reality of the world. Instead of being mere disaster, the long drawn-out human suffering involved in the dissolution of a civilization now appeared as the greatest of all challenges offered to men, creating for them the indispensable social matrix for reception of divine self-revelation. Thus the entire historic process changed its character in Toynbee's eyes. History was no longer simply cyclical; one civilization was no longer strictly equivalent to another. Instead, through the establishment of religions during the declining phases of a civilization's existence, a permanent addition to human knowledge of God was painfully attained. Universal history thus appeared as a gradual, stage-by-stage revelation of God to man. Religions replaced civilizations as thesupremely valuable and significant forms of human association. God displaced man as the protagonist of history.

In this revised picture it is not difficult to recognize the lineaments of the traditional Judaic-Christian interpretation of history. Faith in progress, which Toynbee had rather scornfully rejected during his Hellenized years, was now restored, though not in its secularized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century form. To be sure the cycles of civilization remained; but they served, like the wheels of some great chariot, to carry humanity onward, ever onward toward some divinely appointed and unforeknowable but plainly desirable end.

The development of Toynbee's mind, in response to the public and private experiences of his mature lifetime, obviously involved discrepancies and changes of emphasis, if not outright contradictions, between the earliest and latest volumes of his *A Study of History*. These discrepancies may, perhaps, illustrate a changing temper of our times; I do not know. Certainly his growing religiosity is not unique; other sensitive spirits, too, have turned toward God as he has done; but whether he and they comprise only a minority in the intellectual community of our time, or whether they will appear in later times as pioneers of a new age remains to be seen. However that may be, Toynbee's volumes may be better understood and their discrepancies appreciated only if the reader sets them, as I have tried to do, against the background of the years in which they were written.

It remains, now, to take up our third vantage point and examine Toynbee's work in itself, asking what basic assumptions and intellectual methods underlie his book. It is here, I believe, that we can discover a measure of consistency and unity in his whole thought, despite the disparate conclusions which have at different stages of his life dominated his mind. For Toynbee the Hellenist and Toynbee the man of religion both used much the same methods of inquiry, and at least one common assumption underlies both the earlier and later versions of his vision of history.

Let me say something about Toynbee's methods of inquiry first, and turn to his assumptions at the end of this paper.

Toynbee likes to call himself an empiricist, and repeatedly describes his procedure in seeking illustrations for some general proposition about human history as an "empirical survey." Yet it seems to me that his use of this word is distinctly misleading. For his "empiricism" is an empiricism which already is keenly aware of what it is seeking; and in such a difficult and multifarious study as history, it is all too easy to find evidence to "prove" almost any proposition. The reason is simple. The potential data of history are limitless, and by selecting for attention only those bits and pieces that fit in with one's notions, a convincing "empirical" validation of the preconception with which one started out may often, if not always, be achieved. Yet this is the procedure by which Toynbee again and again seeks to prove or justify his generalizations. It follows, I think, that whatever value they may have□and in my opinion many of them have a great value□does not rest upon the empirical surveys of which he seems so fond.

Indeed, Toynbee's self-proclaimed empiricism seems to me largely a pose, adopted originally, perhaps, partly in an effort to distinguish his thought from Spengler's; and one which has been largely abandoned in his later volumes. Rather, the heart of Toynbee's intellectual procedure has always been the sudden flash of insight such as that which, on his own account, launched him originally on *A Study of History*. The experience of suddenly seeing some new relationship or pattern emerging from a confusion of elements previously unrelated is one which I presume all thinking men experience from time to time; and such experiences often carry with them a considerable emotional force which almost compels assent even before the details and implications of the new insight have been tidily arranged and worked out. Such I conceive to have been the method by which Toynbee worked his way through history; and being endowed by nature with an unusually powerful memory and an even more powerful imagination, his flashes of original insight have been numerous and far ranging. Many of them are, at least for me, profoundly illuminating. Let me just mention two examples from European history where my information is adequate to make it possible for me to control, in some measure, the data Toynbee worked upon. I find, for example, his concept of an abortive Far Western civilization on the Celtic fringe of Europe in the early Middle Ages, and his account of the competition between what he calls the "city-state cosmos" and the national state organization of late medieval and early modern Europe eminently enlightening. His analysis of the successive phases through which Greek and Roman society passed, and especially of the early phases of the growth of Greek civilization, seem to me masterful and entirely persuasive; and to go somewhat further afield, in his anatomy of the Ottoman Empire in particular and of nomad empires in general, he seems to me to

be barking up the right tree, though his analysis may be a bit too schematic to fit each case exactly. It is passages such as these, where the free exercise of a synthetic imagination has succeeded in suggesting novel relationships or discerning new points of view, which, in my opinion, make Toynbee a truly great historian.

But I must also confess that there are other passages in his book where his imagination seems to run amuck. In the interest of fitting his data into a pattern he sometimes seems to cut and slice reality in an arbitrary and even fantastic fashion. I will mention only one instance of this: His description of the Arab caliphate as the resumption of a Syriac universal state after a millennium of Hellenic intrusion does not convince me in the least. Yet once the equation is made, throughout the rest of the book it is baldly taken for granted, and the sense in which the caliphate was also heir to Greek and Roman culture is nowhere seriously taken into account.

Such contrasts as these point up the difficulties of Toynbee's intellectual method. The sort of insights upon which the book is founded come in a flash or not at all, arising, in large, part, from the hidden and unconscious levels of the mind. Their nature is closer akin to the vision of the artist than to strictly rational or merely inductive mental processes. But rational and inductive processes contain their own controls, being bound by logic and sense perception; whereas the constructive imagination lacks such controls, and may go sadly astray by virtue of the very freedom which in lucky instances permits it to strike home to the truth.

My first point, then, about Toynbee's intellectual procedure is his reliance upon insight and imagination rather than upon arguments or induction. In this he is true to the Platonic intellectual tradition of which he is a latter-day representative; for Plato, too, and all good Platonists after him, have experienced and, having experienced, have valued above all else the flash of intellectual insight□the vision of the Idea□which Plato set as the apex of intellectual endeavor.

This suggests another important characteristic of Toynbee's procedure: for just as Plato in the *Republic* falls back upon a myth when he wishes to describe the Idea of the Good, so also Toynbee at critical points in his book resorts to myth and metaphor, and finds in these an otherwise unattainable path to the solution of problems he has set himself.

I need scarcely remind you of the freedom with which he resorts to these devices. Images such as the elaborate metaphor of the climbers on the rock face or the pollarded willow of the first volume give a picturesque sharpness to his concepts; and, more than this, seem sometimes for their author to take on an independent life and reality of their own. Toynbee's mind tends to move freely among visual images, metaphors, and figures of speech, finding baldly abstract and severely verbal formulae a pallid substitute for fully embodied imagination.

One may, indeed, say that his habit of mind is poetic, and it would be a mistake not to recognize his book as a prose epic, whatever else it may be besides. If his literary style were more austere and polished, his book could, I think, stand comparison with Dante,

BOOKRAGS

or better, with Milton. Indeed, in Toynbee's own spirit one might make up a table of literary parallels: As Herodotus is to Homer, and as Thucydides is to Aeschylus, so Toynbee is to Milton. Like Milton, he combines classical humanism with evangelical religion; but Toynbee lacks the doctrinal certainty of his predecessor. In much the same way the two great Greek historians accepted the fundamental intellectual frame-work of their poetic forerunners, but could not accept the pantheon of Olympus.

Toynbee's use of myth as a guide and suggestion to argument occurs at critical turning points in his book rather than throughout. But in falling back on Goethe's *Faust* for hints as to the manner in which a civilization comes into being, in summoning Aeschylus's Prometheus to assist him in comprehending the processes of civilization's growth; or in resorting to the language of Christian theology when discussing the relations of law and freedom in history, Toynbee is reproducing for his readers the processes of mind through which he himself passed in order to arrive at his conclusion.

Toynbee has confessed that this procedure at first filled him with misgiving, flying, as it did, in the face of accepted, scientific, sober-minded, intellectual method. But whether by birth or training, he found peculiar stimulus in the world of poetry and myth, and decided to plunge ahead and follow the suggestions that came to him from these sources in plotting out the drama of human history. In later years, he found a theoretical justification for what he had done. "I have now lived to see," he writes, "the subconscious well-spring of Poetry and Prophecy restored to honour in the Western World by the genius of C. G. Jung; but, before Jung's star at last rose above my horizon, Plato's example ... had given me courage to part company with an early-twentieth-century Western Zeitgeist whose... only realities were those that could be weighed and measured."

As I understand Toynbee' s mature conviction (and I am not sure that I do understand his rather oblique and fleeting references to this arcanum of his thought), mythology represents an attempt to express in figurative and narrative language an intuitive grasp of the deepest reality of the human condition: a reality which can tamely but only inadequately be expressed in sober, severely intellectual discourse. And since the intellect is only part of man, and not necessarily the most far-ranging or reliable part at that, he now feels that he was right in relying upon the inspiration of myths to guide his thoughts, for they represent free intuitions of the soul, whose universal value has been tested by their survival through many ages and countless retellings.

For my present purposes, however, there is no need to explore or to criticize Toynbee's *ex post facto* justification for his procedure. The important point is the procedure itself□a movement of mind and method of thought very deeply implanted in him, and as characteristic of his early Hellenized as of his more recent Christianized outlook.

I think he would agree that Plato is his intellectual master of masters; and this is true not only in his reliance upon flashes of insight, and in his use of metaphor and of myth to convey or suggest meanings which sober matter-of-fact language leaves lifeless, but also in the habit of mind which strives in the face of all the diversity of experience and of history to arrive at the interconnectedness of things□ to see multiplicity and discrepancy

reduced to unity and order, to see the whole in the parts, the One in the Many. This is, indeed, the most basic and fundamental quality of Toynbee's mind, a quality perhaps unusual in an historian, who is normally liable to be arrested and intrigued by the variety and multiplicity of things and to take the data of history more or less for what they are□infinitely various, changeable, shifting, and interesting.

The impulse to find a unity in history implies, of course, that there is such a unity to be discovered; and this seems to me to be the bedrock of Toynbee's entire intellectual enterprise. Here is the basic assumption of his *A Study of History*: that there is intelligible unity behind all the diversity of human historical experience. Moreover, it is possible to characterize the unity Toynbee believes he has discovered; for alike in his earlier as in his later phases of thought, he has seen history as essentially a drama in which the human spirit is confronted with an Other, suffers frustration, and is provoked to respond by changing itself, thus growing, or, when the response falls short of success, suffering decay; but in either case making history. The nature of the Other which confronts the human spirit may vary: it may be physical nature, it may be other men, it may be God; and the later phases of his thought are distinguished from the earlier by the greater emphasis he now puts on the third of these alternatives. Yet in the fundamental picture of the historic process, and in the assumption that there is a Form or Idea (in the Platonic sense) to that process, he has remained entirely consistent, so far as I can see, from beginning to end.

I must confess that I am myself sufficiently close-wedded to the Zeitgeist of the twentieth century to be disturbed by some of Toynbee's mythological and theological language. Yet I find it possible to abstract sound sense from his pages. History, I agree, is change, and change in human society is, I believe, provoked by challenges (of whatever sort) from outside the closed circle of custom and institutional precedent which binds the normal day-by-day life of men together. And the reality of rhythms and patterns in history I am not disposed to deny. No doubt such crude paraphrase would, for Toynbee himself, lose all the barely expressible overtones and utterly distort the truth he has sought to convey. Such imperfect communication is, however, normal in intellectual discourse and should surprise no one. My point is merely this: I find much scintillating suggestion and stimulation to thought in Toynbee's pages; he has opened vistas of history and put questions before me as no other single author has done. For this I am grateful, and insofar as he does the like for others of the historical profession, we should all be grateful. He has certainly not spared himself in pursuing a high goal. I hope that future historians may find inspiration in his example, and will test, criticize, correct, and not entirely forget to emulate his efforts. If we do, the study of history cannot fail to be enriched, and we will worthily uphold Clio's oft-disputed claim to reign a queen among the sciences.

Topics for Further Study

Why has the West assumed such a dominant role in the world today? Is the West a force for good? If it is, why do many other countries, particularly in Asia and the Arab world, resent Western influence in their affairs?

Are Western democracy and capitalism always the best ways to organize human society, or might other ways be equally valid? If so, what might those ways be, and in what situations might they work? (You might want to consider tribalism, socialism, communism, monarchy, and/or dictatorship.)

Is Toynbee's law of challenge-and-response an adequate explanation of the genesis of civilizations? According to Toynbee's law, a difficult environment is more conducive to growth than an easy one. Might such a law apply in the lives of individuals, too? Can you list any examples from your own life when hardship produced more success than ease might have done?

Explore Toynbee's law of withdrawal and return in the lives of creative people. He gives examples from the lives of seven great men: St. Paul, St. Benedict, St. Gregory the Great, the Buddha, Muhammad, Machiavelli, and Dante. Research two more historical figures and show how the same law operated to produce some of their significant achievements. Also, think of achievements in your own life. Was a rhythm of withdrawal and return operating there, too?

Compare and Contrast

1950s: The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union dominates the political landscape of the world.

Today: The world is no longer divided into two competing superpowers. The United States is generally considered to be the sole superpower, but there are other regional centers of power, such as the countries that comprise the European Union, as well as Japan, Russia, and China.

1950s: There is a wide expectation in the industrialized world that machines and robots will soon take over many of the tasks now performed by humans. This is expected to result in greater leisure. Toynbee believes this may mean that people will spend more of their time participating in religious practices.

Today: The average American works more hours than his or her counterpart did a generation ago. Mechanization has not resulted in more leisure although technology has produced a greater variety of choices as to how leisure time is spent.

1950s: Global population nears three billion, and efforts to curb it begin. The Population Council is formed by John D. Rockefeller III; the International Planned Parenthood Federation is also formed.

Today: The United Nations estimates that world population passed six billion in late 1999 and is growing at the rate of seventy-seven million a year. Efforts at population control emphasize not only contraception and family planning but also the improvement of every aspect of women's lives, including health, education, political rights, and economic independence. High levels of education, coupled with economic prosperity, are known to correlate with lower birth rates.

What Do I Read Next?

Journalist Robert D. Kaplan, in *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (2000), argues that the post-Cold War world, far from being the prelude to an era of peace, is likely to be a bleak place for all but a few.

J. M. Roberts' *History of the World* (1993) is a well-illustrated one-volume survey of human history that describes the nature and main lines of development of many of the civilizations that Toynbee discusses although Roberts also includes African civilizations, which Toynbee ignores.

A World History, by William H. McNeill (1998), is a popular one-volume history that emphasizes the civilizations that have arisen in the Middle East, India, China, and Europe. McNeill makes excellent use of recent archaeological discoveries and explains how they have impacted historical scholarship. This edition also includes a discussion of the most important events in world history since 1976.

Toynbee's *Christianity among the Religions of the World* (1957) consists of lectures given by Toynbee in the United States in 1955. He discusses the attitude of Christians toward followers of the other great living religions□both what that attitude is and what it should be.

Further Study

Geyl, Peter, Debates with Historians, Meridian Books, 1958.

Geyl's text includes four chapters that deal with *A Study of History*. Geyl criticizes Toynbee's method as not being genuinely empirical, and he also disputes Toynbee's pessimistic assessment of the state of Western civilization.

Ortega y Gasset, Jose, *An Interpretation of Universal History*, translated by Mildred Adams, W. W. Norton, 1973.

This work is compiled from a lecture course that Ortega gave on Toynbee. Largely hostile to Toynbee, Ortega accuses him of having a mystical approach to history and of relying too much on Greco-Roman history as the key to all other civilizations. Ortega also claims that Toynbee makes major factual errors.

Samuel, Maurice, *The Professor and the Fossil*, Knopf, 1956.

Samuel disputes Toynbee's description of the Jews as fossils of the extinct Syrian civilization with its implication that Jewish culture is lifeless and unproductive.

Stromberg, Roland N., *Arnold J. Toynbee: Historian for an Age in Crisis*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1972.

This is a concise introduction and a balanced and fair-minded evaluation of Toynbee's thought, excellent for those who are studying him for the first time.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) 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, NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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

NCfS 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 Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS series.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The editor of Nonfiction Classics 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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