Sunrise at Campobello Study Guide

Sunrise at Campobello by Dore Schary

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Introduction

Sunrise at Campobello, possibly Dore Schary's best-known work, was first produced by the author on Broadway at the Cort Theater, on January 30, 1958, and later released by Warner Brothers in movie form (1960). Although the play is currently out of print, it delivers a timeless message in its depiction of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's struggle with paralysis. Schary, in his foreword to the play, states that after reading everything he could find on the subject of FDR, he felt there was yet another "moving and dramatic tale to be told" concerning the years of FDR's illness. Schary was so moved that he devoted his entire play to the thirty-four months leading up to FDR's speech in Madison Square Garden, one Schary felt was perhaps the most dramatic in its impact on the American public. Structurally, the work is divided into three acts, all recorded historically by date, and all three acts are equally dramatic in their content. The triumph of Schary's work is the economy the playwright demonstrates in conveying the emotional breadth and depth of a character of unquestionable fame in a very intimate frank manner. In his depiction, Schary offers yet another view of Roosevelt's personal and political development during a very difficult and moving time in his life, before he became president of the United States. The success of the play was unquestionable—it became a Broadway hit earning five Tony Awards.

Author Biography

Dore Schary has been recognized not only for his contributions at MGM studios but also as a man of "firsts." Schary was one of the first producers to make a film addressing anti-Semitism. However, he is best known for his reign at MGM during what some have characterized as a "golden age" in the film industry.

Schary was born on August 31, 1905, in New-ark, New Jersey. After dropping out of Central High School at age fourteen, he returned to graduate, recognizing the necessity of having a diploma after attempting to work on his own. In the mid-1920s, he was said to have played small parts in New York stage plays. Schary married artist Miriam Svet on March 5, 1932. The couple had three children, daughters Joy and Jill, and son Jeb.

His film career began after the submission of his plays to Columbia Pictures. He contracted with Columbia for one year (1932-1933). Having written eleven screenplays for Columbia and his reputation firmly established, Schary was able to freelance for the next seven years. His most noted work during this time would be the Oscar-winning script for the MGM production of *Boys Town.*

From 1948 until 1956, Schary headed up MGM. During his appointment, he was responsible for the films *Singin' in the Rain, Father of the Bride, Ivanhoe,* and others. Arthur Freed's musicals were also created at MGM under the guidance of Schary, who was said to have given Freed the creative freedom to make his work with Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly a success. He also was said to have helped run RKO for a brief time.

After being fired from MGM in 1956, Schary returned to his own projects. It was at this time that he produced the work he is perhaps best known for: *Sunrise at Campobello*. He wrote the play, as well as produced both the stage and film versions of the work. In 1959, he founded Schary Productions and Schary Television Productions.

Over the course of his life, it has been estimated that Schary produced or supervised over two hundred fifty films. His achievements include an Academy Award for best screenplay (1938) for *Boys Town* and two Tony Awards for *Sunrise at Campobello* in 1958. He also was said to have received more than one hundred fifty awards from various community, charitable, and social groups over his lifetime. Dore Schary eventually died of cancer on July 7, 1980, in New York City.

Plot Summary

Act 1

The play opens at the sprawling summer home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), located in the deep woods of Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada. It is August 10, 1921, before FDR was elected president of the United States. As dusk approaches, members of the Roosevelt family return from a day of outdoor activity. Eleanor discusses the day's events with her husband and children and arranges for dinner.

Anna addresses her mother Eleanor, confiding in her that she cannot fathom her mother's tolerance of her brothers. "I think you feel surrounded by the men in the family," Eleanor ultimately offers her daughter. Anna also shares with her mother her grandmother's opinions of Eleanor's severe demeanor with Anna, and she claims to support her grandmother's comments directed at Mr. Howe.

When Jimmy overhears his sister, he asks his father if he can expect Howe will be paying a visit. It seems Howe has asthma and, as a result, can be overheard by Jimmy from the next room, coughing and wheezing. "I want no criticism of or complaints about Mr. Louie Howe from you or anyone else," says FDR gruffly of son Jimmy's comments.

In a private conversation with his wife, FDR shares his concerns about the Harding presidency and its negative impact on the economy. As the conversation continues, a supportive Eleanor affirms Louie's belief in FDR's great potential as a Democratic presidential candidate. Believing the light is dim on his political horizon and hesitant to give up a Wall Street salary, FDR tells his wife:

> Babs, I've weathered battles with Tammany Hall, seven years in the Navy Department, and Mama's massive objections to politics—which she rates one step higher than garbage collecting. I'm quite sure that Wall Street will not corrupt my political convictions.

Moments later, after a playful arm-wrestle between himself and son Jimmy, FDR saunters over to the bay window to admire the sunset. He is seized with a sudden pain in his back, evident as he stumbles, and he grabs his back and grimaces. He attributes the incident to lumbago, or inflammation in his back muscles, and makes his way up to bed to rest.

Scene 2 leaps forward to September 1, 1921, as the action continues at FDR's summer home. Howe is with Eleanor, discussing FDR's medical condition. Mrs. Roosevelt, or Sara, joins the discussion, despite the mutual dislike shared by Howe and Sara. Eleanor says that, after several visits to local physicians, a doctor flew in from Boston and diagnosed FDR's condition as infantile paralysis and explains that "at first Franklin lost

control even of his hands. He couldn't write—or hold a spoon. Now his arms and hands are almost all well. We still don't know about his legs—or his back."

In a particularly tense moment, Howe happens upon Sara telling Eleanor that despite both FDR and Howe's regard for each other, "I've never quite understood it. It's possible Mr. Howe merely enjoys riding along on Franklin's coattails." Howe manages to suppress his anger, but tempers soon flair in a private discussion between himself and Sara. When Howe shares with Sara the decision to move FDR to a hospital in New York, Sara asserts, "the best place for [FDR] is Hyde Park," where he can rest and enjoy life running the family estate. She also insists that her son be discouraged from remaining active in politics. Howe has different ideas and counters, "Mrs. Roosevelt, Hyde Park or Timbuktu, Franklin's political future is ordained." As tempers flair, neither waivers in his or her convictions, and they part company.

Scene 3, the morning of FDR's departure for New York on September 13, 1921, is a tense one for the ailing man. This will be his first appearance in public since the onset of his paralysis. Missy, his secretary, is discussing the travel and other arrangements with Howe. Responding to her somber mood, Howe asks her why she is so down. "Louie—I've been here for two weeks taking dictation and trying to act as he does—as if nothing is the matter." She adds, "Sometimes it seems a sad and foolish game."

Sara also questions her daughter-in-law as to whether the children are emotionally equipped to see their father carried out on a stretcher. Eleanor believes the children will have to learn, sooner or later, to accept FDR's circumstances. Sara is not consoled, stating that her son's arrival at Eastport "should not be handled as a circus." Both Howe and Eleanor stand firm in their convictions, Howe offering Sara assurances that her son will be in full view of the press only after he is seated in his berth on the train.

The sight of FDR silences all as he arrives by stretcher. Howe playfully shares the logistics of the trip with his friend, sharing that the children, Sara, Eleanor, and Missy will be traveling by decoy boat to divert the attention of sightseers and the press as FDR makes his way on a separate boat for the train station at Eastport. Noting his wife's nervousness, FDR says, "Eleanor, you'd better give me that [hat] before you tear it to ribbons." He remains cheerful, if not stoic, until the time of departure. As Eleanor leaves, she notices her husband's back sag against the stretcher wearily, dropping his hat. His wife assists him in its retrieval, questioning his ability to handle the trip. Says FDR, "I'm going to make a damn good try."

Act 2

In May 1922, FDR is working out of his New York home on 65th Street at the outset of scene 1. He is seated in a makeshift wheelchair fashioned out of a kitchen chair. His mood is short, evident in his tone with Missy: "No sweetness and light today—please." His mood quickly changes after reading a letter from Woodrow Wilson congratulating him on his work with the Wilson Foundation. Alone with Eleanor, he opens up about the loneliness he experiences as a result of his invalidism: "When you're forced to sit a lot—

and watch others move about—you feel apart—lonely—because you can't get up and pace around."

A deeper, more heartfelt conversation between husband and wife ensues. FDR explains the affects of his loneliness: "Often when you're alone, certain fears seek you out and hunt for a place in your mind." The pain, he shares, was not initially a cause for despair but rather "the sense that [he] would never get up again." A reliance on faith "for strength to endure" has been the hallmark of his emotional progress. He feels he must "learn to crawl before [he] can walk" through "this fire," this trying time.

Later, Howe tells Eleanor her nerves are shaken from thinking about the speech she must deliver in support of the Democratic party. She confirms his statement, sharing her fears about lecturing, of her inability to control her voice and maintain the proper composure. Thoughts of such responsibility, of an earlier disagreement with Anna, and of her husband's profession of loneliness weigh heavily on Eleanor. When FDR decides to crawl upstairs to bed in a demonstration of newfound dexterity, her composure erodes further. Finally, unable to fight her emotions any longer, Eleanor breaks down in front of the children.

By January 1923, (scene 2), FDR is sporting crutches and leg braces, in addition to his wheelchair. Returning from a speaking engagement with Eleanor, Howe reports that FDR's wife was good, having "almost rid herself of those ridiculous giggles," even managing "to make a point now and then," having read her husband's statement to an audience of several hundred women.

Scolding FDR for careless wrestling with the boys, Eleanor warns him to be careful, telling him to take his time in favor of physical damage. FDR presses the point, telling her that "something has been changing" inside of himself. He acknowledges Eleanor's words of wisdom, telling her that the process of recovery has been a great exercise in patience. From it, he adds, he has achieved a balance in knowing "when to try for the brass ring" or when to enjoy the ride" without effort. FDR adds, "I don't know when it began. What minute or day or hour—but today I was suddenly aware that, despite everything, I felt sure-footed."

Later, Anna goes to her father and mother with a confession that she has been selfish. She explains she is hurt because she feels as though she has been kept in the dark, as though "everybody was keeping me out of rooms." Eleanor validates her feelings by accepting blame for her part in the situation, stating for both herself and FDR that in the future, "We'll try to find more time" for Anna.

The conflict between Sara and her son escalates over FDR's future plans. FDR reacts strongly to Sara's plans to electrify the lift, a dumbwaiter her son uses to hoist himself upstairs, because he appreciates the exercise of physical upper-body strength necessary to complete the task. Sara says, "sometimes I think Eleanor, certainly only with motives of deep love, and that ugly little man, push you too rapidly." The tenor of the discussion changes to one of anger with FDR's demands that his mother refrain

from criticizing Howe and accept his condition, regardless of whether or not he could leave his "braces and canes and wheelchairs" behind.

On the subject of political involvement, Sara shares with her son her fears, telling FDR that his cousin died because of "ambitious people around him." She adds, "Died because he didn't know when to stop—didn't know that you can't make it the same world for all people." A discussion of the wealth and prestige of the Roosevelt family ignites the passions of both Sara and her son. When Sara reminds FDR of the "advantages of birth," he feigns indifference. Sara once again asserts her ideas of sensibility—that her son forsake politics for a life in Hyde Park, and the discussion spirals out of control. FDR finally exclaims, "That's enough. There'll be no more talking—no more."

Later, low and dispirited, FDR, driven by his need to prove himself to Sara, attempts to stand with the aid of his crutches, only to collapse in exhaustion, exasperation, and pain. With grim determination, he once again attempts to rise.

Act 3

It is May 1924, and the Roosevelts are still at their New York home. FDR is privileged to receive several guests. The first is Mr. Lassiter, who challenges the support of Governor Smith's campaign for presidential nomination on the basis of Smith's Catholicism. Lassiter's fear, shared by many, he claims, is that religious dogma will dominate American politics if Smith is elected. FDR quickly dismisses Lassiter after a strong speech ridiculing Lassiter's ideas.

The second guest to visit FDR is Governor Al Smith himself. Howe suspects that Smith would like FDR to be his speaker. "You're protestant—dry—rural. You're the logical cowcatcher," surmises Howe. FDR is not easily persuaded. He believes the appointment would be made reluctantly. Further, he is not certain he could stand the demands of "public service," that his aspirations and dreams ring false in "the hard light of practical politics." Howe will not consider FDR's position and tells his friend, "I am no idle dreamer, Franklin. Working with you is an act of faith. I believe God has an eye on your future."

In conversation with FDR, Smith proves Howe is correct in his suspicions. He first speaks of a tight race for the nomination and then reflects on what issues his former speaker would have focused on regarding the current election. FDR, posturing to accommodate the invitation he suspects from Smith, mentions issues of the Klan, the Volstead Act, Smith's faith, and the obligation of a candidate to keep the party together, among other topics. When FDR affirms his prior suspicions about the nomination, Smith replies that he and Howe "were both too surprised to be surprised." The scene ends as Missy, Howe, and FDR plan the logistics of FDR's trip to the platform at the Garden (Madison Square Garden).

The venue for scene 2 is Madison Square Garden, June 26, 1924, at about 11:30 p.m., and FDR is preparing to give his speech nominating Governor Smith for the Democratic presidential candidacy. Howe and FDR argue about the end of the speech as FDR puts on his leg braces. Sara arrives to say "God Bless you" and to tell her son to "speak clearly." Even Howe supports her sudden change of heart, remarking that in a couple of months Sara may be involved in politics. The play ends on the platform at Madison Square Garden. Upon introduction, FDR stands up and proceeds to the lectern, walking on his crutches to the roar of an appreciative crowd.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Sunrise at Campobello is the story of Franklin D. Roosevelt's (FDR) battle against polio, which strikes him in the summer of 1921 as the play opens. The scene is set at the Roosevelt summer home at Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada. As dusk nears, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt is calling her five children in from an afternoon of swimming and outdoor fun. Her husband, (FDR) has played alongside his children with enthusiasm all day.

As the family awaits dinner, the children discuss which parts they will read in the play *Julius Caesar,* this evening's family entertainment. There is also discussion about their beloved grandmother Sara, who is traveling in London but has sent a letter encouraging them in their French lessons. Glancing through the evening newspaper, FDR is glad that his name is missing for a change but comments on the rampant unemployment under Harding's administration.

Eleanor reminds her husband that people think he is the man to reverse the downward trends in the country. FDR, however, does not think that a defeated vice-presidential candidate as he was would instill the greatest confidence in the Democratic Party. Still, he requests Eleanor to keep an eye on him should he venture into too deep water.

Dinner is announced, but as FDR rises to join the family, he is struck with a searing pain in his back. Hoping that it is just an attack of lumbago, Eleanor sends him to bed as the voices of the children reverberate through the house.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Historically accurate, the scene opens on August 10, 1921, the actual day that FDR had his initial polio attack. FDR's life has been a robust one both professionally and personally. He held high positions in the Navy and on Wall Street and actively participated in the lives of his five children. Raised as a privileged child himself, FDR's children also enjoy the advantages of a wealthy family, as evidenced by their leisure activities and scholarly entertainment and lessons.

The unsuccessful political run as vice president under Cox still stings FDR but there is foreshadowing in his request to Eleanor to keep an eye on him should he venture in too deep again. FDR is currently content to keep a low profile but that will soon change as the onset of polio coincides with his simmering political ambitions.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Three weeks have passed since FDR felt the first pains of polio. Confined to bed as his physician works to determine the scope of his condition, FDR has suffered the physical and emotional pain associated with this overwhelming situation.

Louie Howe, FDR's trusted advisor, has arrived as moral support for his old friend.

According to the physician attending FDR at this remote Canadian location, the paralysis should be only temporary with a full recovery almost certain.

Sara Roosevelt, FDR's mother, has cut short her trip to England in order to travel to Campobello to be near her son. Her disbelief and fear of the severity of FDR's condition throws her into an authoritative mode and she clashes with Mr. Howe, who is just as strong-willed on his stance that Franklin continue his career in politics.

Although Howe and Sara do not agree on the direction of FDR's life, Eleanor holds great stock in Louie's abilities to match a plan to her husband's talents and ambitions.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

As a mother, Sara Roosevelt's instincts are true and natural in wanting to take FDR home to Hyde Park after his physician visits in New York City. Fortunately, FDR is surrounded by a close advisor and an adoring wife who want to see that he lives the fullest life possible. The conflict between the two forces is glaring in their opposition and it will be the state of FDR's spirit that will determine the future.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Nearly two weeks have passed and FDR is about to be transported from Campobello to New York for more sophisticated medical treatment. The house is full of activity as the children run about in preparation for the boat trip back to the mainland. FDR's secretary, Missy Lehand, is also at the house.

Louie has devised a plan so the reporters will not see or snap any pictures of FDR being transported on a stretcher. Sara, Eleanor, and the children will be sent off on one boat in the hope that the press will follow them to the dock. In the meantime, FDR will be transported to another dock and seated on the train before the press catches on to the trick.

It has been determined that no announcement about the paralysis will be delivered to the press until FDR has received thorough examinations in New York. Even then, the agreed upon story is that the paralysis is mild and FDR is expected to recover fully.

Emotions run high for Missy, who is forced to take notes on her boss's plans for conferences, business meetings, and ultimately the overthrow of the Democratic Party. Howe soothes her into maintaining the fazade of normalcy because it's so important for FDR that everyone around him thinks these things can still be true.

The time has come to leave and Eleanor and FDR are alone for a few minutes. She can see the pain in his face. His resolution to keep pushing forward gives her strength too and she calls to the men who will carry FDR to the waiting boat.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

FDR's move out of Campobello to New York symbolizes his refusal to stay isolated in favor of a more public life. A lesser man may have opted for a reclusive life to be spared pain and humiliation, but his willful nature drives him forward even when he cannot physically propel himself.

There is foreshadowing in Missy's statements about Franklin's intentions to honor business commitments and revitalize the Democratic Party. Just notes in a journal at this point, his intentions will soon materialize into those very deeds.

Louie has also launched the beginning of one of the most successful public relations campaigns in political history. His plan is that FDR is never to be seen in a vulnerable or compromising position, which is a masterful strategy in the end.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

The living room of the Roosevelt home in New York City is tasteful yet comfortable and FDR is seated in a wheelchair of his own design. He deftly uses another gadget he has fashioned to picks up some stamps from his collection that have fallen on the floor. Although he has managed a few successes, his mood is far from happy. His abrupt nature does not bother Missy, who expertly humors him.

A letter from Woodrow Wilson brightens FDR's mood a little as the ex-president thanks him for his commitment to the Wilson Foundation. As usual, Eleanor is supportive of his efforts but is caught short when FDR mentions that his homemade wheelchair is easy to navigate and helps to take away the loneliness. It had never occurred to her that Franklin could be lonesome in this busy household and with all the personal attention from her.

For FDR, invalidism, however temporary or permanent, is lonely because one simply cannot be involved in the lives of those passing by. The possibility of fire in the house is also a concern for FDR and he shares with Eleanor that he has begun to practice crawling so that he could escape if necessary.

In an especially tender moment, Franklin tells Eleanor for the first time about the fear of never walking again that debilitated him more than the pain for those first weeks at Campobello. For some reason, he believes he is being tested for a higher purpose and to learn some humility. Their intimacy is interrupted by Anna, distraught over her room being given to Mr. Howe. Anna leaves without resolution as Mr. Howe enters to discuss the concept of Eleanor giving political speeches in FDR's stead.

As Howe and FDR continue their conversation, Missy announces the arrival of Mr. Brimmer, who FDR has engaged to build some dirigibles. Howe is aghast at Franklin's plan to shuttle passengers between New York and Chicago with this new idea of his.

As evening closes in, Franklin announces that he will forego crutches on this night and crawl up the stairs to bed. Sara is shocked that FDR will risk letting the children see him this way but Eleanor is resolute in wanting the children to understand the reality of their situation.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Adapting but not resigned to his situation, FDR is still pushing forward in mind and body. He vents his frustrations on those close to him, but they accept his behavior as frustration and not the anger it appears to be. It's evident that his heart is still in politics. His mood brightens considerably with the letter from Woodrow Wilson and he hangs on the political news in the papers Louie brings every day. In the back of his mind, he has

fashioned a comeback, and even reticent Eleanor is being groomed to make speeches on his behalf until he is able again. The marriage is being sorely tested and Eleanor stings from some of FDR's self-absorption, but she is a noble soul in her own right; FDR's is not the only character being tested by his illness.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

This scene opens with FDR arm wrestling with two of his sons and it's apparent that his upper body strength has not been diminished in any way. Missy's interruption with the mail brings yet another framed copy of the poem *Invictus,* FDR's favorite. He studies it for a moment and asks that it be hung in his bedroom. Much of his correspondence these days is with other polio victims and he is pleased to see some letters in the stack Missy has left.

Back from the latest political speech, Louie updates Franklin on Eleanor's progress and the positive outpouring of support. Franklin is encouraged that his political career will stay afloat as long as he has Eleanor and Louie on his side.

Once again, FDR shares some intimate thoughts with Eleanor about his future. Patience is something he had always lacked, but he has learned it completely now and has a new appreciation for the world. As odd as it may sound, the illness has given him a feeling of being sure-footed and he is gaining more confidence each day. Eleanor is quietly happy for him and the new joy that is coming back.

Before retiring for the night, Louie stops in to see FDR, with whom he shares a sentimental moment. Franklin thanks his old friend for everything, and although the sentence is brief, it could fill volumes about the love these men have for each other. Spotting the framed copy of *Invictus,* Louie begins to read aloud, dramatically at first but then more sincerely and it is clear that he is giving tribute to his friend who struggles to overcome an unjust fate.

Franklin's mother tries one more time to get him to understand his limitations and to resign himself to a quiet life in upstate New York. FDR will hear none of her speech. He is sorry for the quarrel but will not sacrifice his vision for the easier road. After she leaves him, FDR attempts to walk without crutches but falls and struggles to pull himself up to a chair as the scene ends.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

Strength and health are returning, not only to FDR but also to his family and friends. Softened by the polio experience, FDR has ironically gained strength. His compassion for other polio victims has taught him humility but he has not lost sight of the words from *Invictus;* "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." His view of the world as well as the slower pace has forced him to realize the value of the people who share his immediate life. Their love will empower him to persevere to meet his goals in spite of the obvious handicap. The last push away from his mother seems to have been the final thrust back into the life he wants and that is his destiny.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

Spring of 1924 brings a visit from a representative of an organization to which Franklin belongs. They have sent him to share their concern for FDR's backing of Al Smith in the next presidential election. The organization does not condone Smith because of his Catholic beliefs and they fear that Franklin's support will send the wrong message. FDR is firm in his backing Smith and the man leaves without further intervention.

Smith is due to see FDR this afternoon as well. It is suspected in the Democratic Party that Smith will want FDR to nominate him at the national convention coming up. When Smith arrives, the suspicions are confirmed and FDR heartily agrees to announce the nomination.

There are no questions in Franklin's mind about Smith being the right candidate. The only trepidation he has about the convention is whether he can stand the required time at the podium. Not letting that fear get in the way, FDR directs Missy to get a blueprint of Madison Square Garden so that they can prepare for his walk to the lectern on that night.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

The political arena beckons to FDR even if he is just in a position to nominate. All that matters is that he will be back in the game with his reputation intact. Eleanor and Louie have masterfully kept his profile visible during his recuperation and it is gratifying to FDR that the party still values his skills and influence. The compassion he has gained from his illness enables him to step up and nominate another man, but in the back of his mind, FDR knows he is stepping toward his future.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

Backstage at Madison Square Garden, FDR waits with Eleanor, Louie, Missy, and his children. The noise from the crowd spills into the tiny room where they wait, putting them on edge in anticipation of Franklin's imminent walk on stage. Characteristically calm, FDR manages to humor the others out of their tensions yet it is clear he is slightly apprehensive.

There are last minute suggestions on the ending of FDR's speech but he is fixed on what he wants to say and he politely rebuffs Eleanor and Louie. As the time draws near, Jimmy helps his father secure the braces on his legs and get dressed. Finally, it is time and FDR leaves the tiny room amid the well wishes of his family.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

FDR has been preparing for this moment for the past three years, notable for its political importance but also for the fortitude and stamina of this man. Graciously introducing another man as a nominee for the office he wanted shows great character and resolve, but foreshadows the moment when he will step up to the podium for his own acceptance of the nomination just a few years later.

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

The platform in Madison Square Garden is crowded with FDR and his family. Deafening noise slowly calms as the Speaker begs for attention. Following the roll call from Connecticut, the Speaker then introduces FDR and the crowd swells with applause. Franklin begins the long slow walk of only ten steps from his seat to the podium. Relinquishing his crutches, FDR grasps the lectern with one hand and waves with the other to a riotous crowd. Beaming broadly, he basks in the tribute to his character and his future.

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

With ten steps, FDR begins his comeback to political life and ultimately his destiny. The significance of the play's title comes to fruition in the last scene. FDR had witnessed many spectacular sunrises during his summers at Campobello but surely the most brilliant sunrise for him and his family is the day when the struggles are sidelined for a few moments and a new day is in view. FDR's recovery is particularly poignant for his family but ultimately vitally important for the future of America, where his courage and vision will persevere through another bleak period into a brighter future.

Characters

Babs

See Eleanor Roosevelt

FDR

See Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Frank

See Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Louis McHenry Howe

Small, homely, and sporting a badly wrinkled suit and vest, Louis McHenry Howe, (also known as Howe or Louie), is not only a chain smoker and an asthmatic but also a devoted friend and admirer of FDR's. He has carved out a place for himself in the Roosevelt family, privy to the most intimate details of FDR's comings and goings. He first appears in the play as one of his friend's chief caregivers, indicated in an exchange with Jimmy regarding his father's condition. In another conversation with Eleanor, the depth of his involvement is also apparent when Eleanor asks Howe of his "plans" with respect to FDR's paralysis.

Howe is also of great comfort to the family in his efforts to assuage their fears. When Jimmy tells Howe of his fears about his father's condition, Howe admits his own worries before relating an anecdote testifying to the personal strength of his friend. He assures Jimmy, first by placating him, "he's a big and strong man in many ways," and then by telling FDR's son, "he's going to win this one." He is equally sensitive to Eleanor's feelings, snapping her out of an emotional outburst by telling her that no one is more deserving of a good cry than she is.

In his role as political supporter, Howe acts as FDR's advisor and defender, in addition to offering his friend encouragement. The level of influence Howe wields, not only with FDR but also with FDR's family as an advocate of FDR's, is made obvious in conversation. Specifically, when Sara pushes for her son to abandon political life in exchange for a sedentary one in Hyde Park, Howe rails against the idea. At Sara's response that FDR is more to her than just a political hopeful, Howe fires back, "But he is, above all, himself . . . and he happens to be the best damned progressive in the country."

His skill as a volunteer advisor and public relations strategist is exemplified by the precautions Howe takes to move FDR from Campobello to New York for further treatment. The hours spent coaching Eleanor for speaking engagements and the carefully planted items in the press reveal the dedication and devotion Howe has for his friend. He does not just support FDR, he believes in him, perhaps with a vision far greater even than does FDR himself. In a particularly poignant or moving moment, FDR questions his own political abilities in light of his handicaps. Howe will have none of it, telling FDR that he believes his future to be preordained by God.

Jimmy

See James Roosevelt

Mr. Lassiter

Mr. Lassiter is a middle-aged, well-dressed man with an authoritative presence who calls on FDR on behalf of the democratic constituency he represents. When he pays FDR a visit, he warns him of the inevitable backlash FDR can expect for endorsing a Catholic as the Democratic candidate for the presidency. He is cold, formal, and straightforward with FDR in his complaints of Governor Smith and becomes completely enraged when his challenges to FDR are met with sarcasm.

Miss Marguerite LeHand

Miss Marguerite LeHand, or Missy, as she is commonly referred to, is FDR's perky personal secretary. She is capable and conscientious as well as caring when it comes to supporting her boss. With her take-charge attitude, Missy fires questions at Howe concerning FDR's travel arrangements, demonstrating her ability to note and take care of the smallest details despite the excitement over her boss's condition. She is also deeply concerned for her boss, sharing with Howe that FDR's condition moves her to the point of tears.

Mama

See Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt

Missy

See Miss Marguerite LeHand

Anna Roosevelt

As the only daughter to the Roosevelts, Anna views herself as a mature adolescent forced to tolerate her male siblings. These struggles to reach adulthood do not go unnoticed by her family. Her first comment to Eleanor is that she honestly cannot understand how her mother can calmly raise three boys. In this and subsequent instances, Anna betrays resentment harbored towards her parents for treating her like a child. When her younger bother tells Anna they are supposed to wait outside, Anna says with great pause, "I know—like—children." In another moment, she is compelled to share the hurt she feels over giving up her room.

Later, Anna reveals to her parents that she feels she has been kept apart from their business far too long. Anna asserts herself as an adult in an effort to bridge the gap she feels between herself and her parents. She expresses her sense of isolation from the inner workings of her family, at one point pleading with her parents to please let her in on whatever it is they are experiencing: "I felt everybody was keeping me out of rooms. I didn't really understand what you've been going through." Her success lies not only in her parents' reaction but in the way she handles, for example, her grandmother, as Anna begins to challenge rather than to defend what her grandmother has to say.

Eleanor Roosevelt

The wife of FDR and mother to his four children, Eleanor Roosevelt, or "Babs," as she is affectionately referred to by her husband, is described as a tall, stately, and willowy young woman of thirty-six. One of her greatest qualities is the great personal fortitude and strength she demonstrates at the sudden onset of her husband's infantile paralysis.

Instead of indulging in her own personal grief and fear, Eleanor is too concerned about the needs of her family to show her own feelings. In one particular instance, she warns Howe to tread lightly around FDR's mother, Sara, telling him to "be understanding," rather than to engage her in argument, saying to him, "it's been a desperately unhappy day for her."

Her strength and sense of emotional self-control often mask the true depth of her feelings. At only one juncture in the play is the audience permitted to see her emotional struggles: when Eleanor breaks down in front of her children while reading them a story, she quickly recovers, and in a demonstration of personal strength, unselfishness, and concern for her children, she responds to Howe's offer of support, saying, "I must have terrified the children. I won't ever do that again. Not ever." In another instance, she apologizes, without excuse, to her daughter for not being available when Anna needs her.

Eleanor is also a staunch supporter of her husband's political beliefs, as well as of his career, and takes both very seriously. As a result of FDR's condition, she has agreed to several speaking engagements for her husband's sake, willing to be (as described by Howe) "Franklin's eyes, ears—and legs" in the political arena. She also supports FDR

by offering her own perspective, insight, and advice, thereby guiding his political career in a positive direction.

Finally, she is FDR's wife. Her influence on his political life is also a function of their relationship. Perceptive and compassionate, Eleanor seems to anticipate her husband's needs in such a way that she is able to help him maintain a sense of dignity and independence. On the boat trip to New York, Eleanor responds to her husband's visible fatigue and exhaustion, not with exaggerated worry or panic, but by opting instead to calmly retrieve his hat. In another, her wisdom proves to be a valuable commodity in the relationship. She cautions FDR against overextending himself in his attempts to walk by offering up a biblical passage—"A patient man shall bear for a time and afterward joy shall spring up unto him." This moment, as do similar moments between the couple, inspires FDR to be introspective and, at the same time, encouraged.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

A man of great strength, intelligence, wisdom, wit, and compassion, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (also known as FDR and Frank), devoted father, husband, and politician, bravely battles his infantile paralysis in order to realize success for himself. FDR appears in the first act primarily as a family man, often encouraging his children to speak French or playfully wrestling with his sons. He is a strong presence in the Roosevelt household, the foundation of which is clearly shaken by his sudden illness.

FDR is, however, a strong man, and it is his incredible mental and physical strength that keeps both him and his family on track. At the outset of his illness, Howe pointedly tells Jimmy to "stop being frightened," that his father is a tough adversary for any illness, "a strong and big man in many ways." At one point in the narrative, FDR insists on ascending the stairs using only his arms to propel him. At other times, FDR speaks of his physical condition in terms of the physical work he plans to do to rehabilitate his muscles, without giving voice to actual limitations.

Apart from displays of physical strength, FDR's great emotional strength is made manifest in his most private moments. In public, he meets the most difficult emotional challenges with humor and graciousness, in one instance jokingly thanking those involved in his transport by stretcher: "Gentlemen—thank you for the sedan chair. I feel like the Caliph of Bagdad." When he is alone on stage, only then is the audience aware of the depth of his own struggles to recuperate from the paralysis. His efforts are illuminated fully, for example, in reaction to the fight with his mother. Left alone to ponder the physical limitations she has used to define him, FDR decides to prove her wrong by attempting to rise up off the chair by himself, aided only by crutches. Although he slumps back down in great pain, humiliation, and defeat, he rubs his legs and attempts several more times to rise again, despite potential suffering and failure. This spirit will manifest itself in his first public speaking engagement, during which he attempts, for the first time, to stand at a podium, aided only by leg braces and crutches.

His behavior is the hallmark of one able to overcome adversity. At no time during the play does FDR voice a complaint or engage in self-pity. Instead, he demonstrates a great introspective power when dealing with his own paralysis. In a private moment with Eleanor, he shares his frustration at not being able to move about as others can, but FDR's discussion is coming from a point of personal assessment. It is clear FDR is considering his frustrations and his reactions to such frustrations as part of a character-building exercise rather than in self-pity. Similarly, in the next moment, FDR shares with Eleanor that, because his greatest fear is being trapped by fire, he has been privately practicing crawling to overcome his fear of possible entrapment in a burning building.

His strength of character is rivaled only by his deep love of politics. FDR's desire for a political life far outweighs any desire he might have for a sedentary, stress-free life on the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park. During a discussion with his mother, FDR also demonstrates his sense of high principals, his devotion to what is just and true, characteristics favorable to one who is aspiring for public office. When Sara tells him his idea to sell a portion of his personal estate is childish, her son reacts strongly, claiming, "I will not hang onto stock bringing me an income over the tortured bodies of miners who lived as though they were in the middle ages." He is, as both Eleanor and Howe believe, a natural.

A strong devotion to the Democratic party and a keen awareness of political issues also foster the now mythic figure in Schary's characterization of FDR. Eleanor goes so far as to speak publicly for her husband in support of the Democratic party, agreeing to be the official "eyes and ears" he needs to keep up with political trends. When Governor Smith visits, FDR demonstrates his knowledge of politics by zeroing in on, and sharing with Smith, the issues he feels are relevant to the success of his speech for the nomination. But what perhaps distinguishes FDR for a life of political greatness is his ability to be a freethinker and a visionary. When Lassiter comes to him with his concerns about Smith's Catholic background and the negative impact it will have on the Democratic nomination, FDR haughtily informs him that he sees no justification for removing Smith on the basis of his religious background. He remains firm in his choice in spite of the general consensus that, by appointing a devout Catholic, religion and politics will conflict with party objectives.

James Roosevelt

James Roosevelt, or Jimmy, is the voice for the children—he is the only one (besides Anna) to express his siblings' as well as his own fears about their father's illness. He is also extremely careful and protective around his mother. In a discussion with Howe about his father's condition, Jimmy confides that he would feel better if he knew what was going on but that he does not want to bother his mother over it. Of his brothers, Jimmy is the only one present behind the scenes, helping his father to prepare for Smith's nomination speech at Madison Square Garden.

Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt

She is strong-willed, controlling, and stoic in the face of adversity, and as family matriarch and mother to FDR, Mrs. Sara Delano Roosevelt's opinions touch everyone within the FDR household. The nature of her character is evident as FDR shares a letter from Sara, or Mama, as she is also referred to. He relays the contents of the letter, sharing that Mama "doesn't have a high opinion" of one thing or another, or "believes in" this or that, and the like. Her specific expectations are that the children learn French. More important, it is in this particular moment that the power of her influence over the household is made apparent. When Sara mentions that she "expects to find a French family on my return," FDR tells his children, "you'd better be speaking perfect French." Indeed, throughout the play the children are encouraged to speak French in preparation for their grandmother's visit.

Regarding her son's medical condition, Sara has equally strong feelings that run counter to the convictions of those closest to him, including those of FDR. She is not afraid to assert her influence in an effort to control her son's situation; she often makes sarcastic and cutting assaults on both Howe and her son. For example, knowing the influence Howe wields in her son's life, Sara confronts FDR's friend, telling him that, although she is grateful for his help in the case of her son's illness, she "is less grateful for [Howe's] untimely and grandiose schemes," namely his plans for FDR to enter the political arena.

Because of her tendency towards protectiveness, Sara wields an emotional power and influence that can send her son into a state of extreme anger. She values the blue blood running through her family tree and tells Franklin that his resentment of such connection is ill founded: "Advantages of birth should be worn like clothes, with grace and comfort," says a haughty Sara. In the end, however, it is Sara who surrenders to the idea of FDR's political future by offering her blessing on his impending speech. FDR, as does the audience, discovers that Sara, like her son, is in the end fair-minded enough to put aside differences for the sake of FDR's happiness and success.

Governor Alfred E. Smith

Al Smith is in his prime—saucy, smart, and healthy—and seeking FDR's help to win the Democratic presidential nomination as his speech writer. Smith accomplishes this objective after mentally priming FDR with his concerns.

Themes

It is FDR's strength of mind that allows him to endure both mental and physical pain with courage. The events of the play, and the portrayal of FDR at crucial moments in the thirty-four-month period represented by his illness and first public appearance, support the idea of a man who can deal with seemingly insurmountable problems with courage, humor, and grace.

Style

Chronicle

The play is a chronicle of the events from a specific time period in FDR's political history, namely, the thirty-four months leading up to a public appearance that would change his political destiny. Action occurring in a given act is presented in chronological order, indicated at the beginning of an act by date, affirming the historical authenticity and significance of the events of the work. The effort FDR makes personally and politically to overcome his illness forms the framework for the play. The first act accounts for the initial onset of FDR's paralysis and the shockwaves this attack sends through the Roosevelt family. In the second, Schary explores the depth of FDR's determination and personal struggles in the face of adversity. Finally, in the last act of the play, FDR develops the courage and resolve he needs not only to sell himself to Governor Smith but to walk out in front of the teeming crowds in Madison Square Garden to speak to the nomination of Smith for Democratic presidential candidate.

Climax

The turning point in the narrative, the moment when the conflict is at its greatest intensity in the play, comes in the final precious minutes before FDR is to appear on the platform. He nervously adjusts his braces with the help of his son, and Sara arrives in a show of support. She expresses her concerns regarding the "howling mob outside," and there is a predictable moment of apprehension between mother and son. Up to this point, tensions have been building between them over FDR's future in politics. However, when FDR defends the proceedings as being typical, Sara takes an unexpected tack, telling him it is "hardly the time" to give her "lessons in politics." She simply wants a moment, she tells her son, to say "God bless you." This final show of support serves to erase any conflicted feelings FDR has harbored earlier. There is a clear break in the tension that was mounting earlier in the play. It is a turning point marked by Howe, who acknowledges Sara's gesture as a peace offering in their otherwise verbally charged relations, quipping that Sara resembles a career politician.

Foreshadowing

The author employs foreshadowing in the work, creating an expectation in the reader that FDR will maintain his sense of resolve and pursue politics, despite his physical challenges. For example, an earlier struggle to rise in his chair predicts, or foreshadows, the final moment in the play, when FDR is seen standing and preparing to make his way out on the platform at Madison Square Garden to deliver Smith's nomination speech. This approach is effective because it creates a new level of anticipation and excitement in an otherwise familiar story.

Point of View

Events of the play are presented outside of any one character's perspective, in the third person. At no time does a character address the audience or offer any special insight into his or her motivations or actions. Instead, the audience is able to draw conclusions about the characters themselves by observing them in dialogue with various other characters. The dynamic nature of such interactions gives breadth and depth to these individuals and helps the audience to better understand their motivations. When FDR decides to rise up out of his wheelchair, for example, the audience is aware of his discussion with his mother occurring only moments beforehand, and in this light, the decision to stand serves as a challenge to his mother and what she has implied about FDR's condition.

Historical Context

Introduction

Many harken back to the period of the 1950s in reflection of more innocent times. As tract housing grew and suburbs exploded, the American dream became synonymous with the white picket fence. To sum up the era of the fifties in this fashion is to deny the McCarthy witch hunts, the practice of espionage in favor of patriotism, and the mounting racial tensions that set the civil rights movement in motion.

Religious Revivalism

In the late 1940s, the fervor that fueled religious revivalism during the 1930s had long since died due to dishonest clergy and other unsavory characters at the core of the movement. Billy Graham, a Charlotte, North Carolina, native would change all of that. After graduating from Wheaton College in Illinois in 1943, he became the local pastor of a church in Illinois. He also headed up the Youth for Christ movement on a national level. He put together a traveling revival team in 1947, and gained notoriety two years later after an appearance in Los Angeles. Graham also made effective use of television and radio. As a result, he became one of the best known and most admired religious leaders in the United States. He also legitimized evangelism in America and also became an appointed spiritual advisor to President Nixon during his term in Washington.

The Army-McCarthy Hearings

It is hard to believe the impact that an insignificant senator would have on the nation in a very short period of time. When Joseph R. McCarthy from Wisconsin stood up in front of the Women's Republican Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, he became the focus of the nation. He shocked the organization and the country, claiming he possessed a list of approximately 205 card-carrying communists in the U.S. State Department. Perhaps the most perplexing fact: no one ever really saw the list; yet the sheer notion of it sent the nation into a panic.

Even more perplexing were the results of what seemed to be groundless accusations on the part of McCarthy. Members of the State Department and others were subjected to senate hearings despite a lack of evidence necessary to incriminate them. As a result, many careers were destroyed and reputations ruined due to the reckless ambition of McCarthy. With the prompting of attorney Roy Cohn and others in the McCarthy camp, the ruthless Senator made a list of suspected communists who were prominent celebrities in Hollywood. Again the results were unfavorable for the performers and others in the industry; the accused were blacklisted and deemed unemployable, a death sentence to any careers they may have had.

Espionage in the United States

The testing of the atomic bomb November 1, 1952, and the subsequent development of a hydrogen bomb by the Soviets later on August 12, 1953, took the United States by complete surprise. The question on the minds of American officials: how could the Soviets develop this technology so quickly?

Investigations of the soviet atomic power led to Harry Gold, an American chemist who had been fed secrets from a weapons laboratory in New Mexico. Further digging implicated Julius and Ethel Rosen-berg, who were identified as mediators in the exchange of information between Harry Gold and David Greenglass, a soldier and brother of Ethel Rosenberg. Federal agents arrested the Rosenbergs. Admitted communists, they nevertheless pled not guilty to charges of espionage leveled against them. The Rosenbergs were found guilty and executed in June of 1953.

Civil Rights

When Thurgood Marshall, an attorney for the NAACP, appealed the lower court decision determining that Linda Brown (Brown v. the Board of Education) could not attend the all-white public school just four blocks from her home, the community of Topeka, Kansas became the center of a highly publicized racial conflict.

The lower court deemed that the board of education's insistence that Linda Brown attend a segregated school was legal under the separate but equal policy established in the Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson,* 1896. Marshall appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and, subsequently, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, along with the doctrine of separate but equal, was overturned on May 17, 1954.

In response to the law, many schools accepted the higher court's decision, but in Little Rock, Arkansas, the response was quite different. President Eisenhower mobilized 1,200 U.S. Army paratroopers to escort nine black students past the Arkansas National Guard (initially ordered by the governor of the state to block their path) to their classrooms.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a Montgomery, Alabama seamstress, refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a city bus and was arrested and jailed. African Americans reacted by boycotting Montgomery city buses for one year. This forced Montgomery into the political spotlight, as it did the notion of civil rights for African Americans. Right on the heels of Parks' experience came a wave of African Americans also asserting their rights by participating in sit-ins, as well as other means of nonviolent protest. Instead of fighting back, African Americans engaged in sit-ins as a means to combat the violence perpetrated against them by the white majority. When whites attempted to forcibly break up such events, the combative and violent methods used appeared as brutal acts of violence, considered against the backdrop of a passive sit in, thus earning African Americans sympathy and support from liberals, moderates, and whites who may not have been interested before.

Finally, it was Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, given during the march on Washington, D.C. in 1963. The "I Have a Dream" speech is credited with helping put the civil rights movement at the forefront of American politics.

The Cure for Polio

A seasonal epidemic, polio, or infant paralysis, was a deadly infection that struck both infants and young children during the warm summer months. While some cases were fairly mild, polio had the potential to leave its victims either temporarily or permanently paralyzed or restricted to an iron lung; in some cases, the disease caused death. The iron lung meant a life of containment in a chamber providing air pressure around the patient's body to induce lung expansion and contraction.

In 1954, Dr. Jonas Salk began testing a vaccine he had developed at the University of Pittsburgh, which he believed would eliminate the virus. In 1955, Salk's vaccine was approved by the Food and Drug Administration, permanently halting the polio epidemic in the United States.

Critical Overview

Sunrise at Campobello has been called a pet project for veteran filmmaker Dore Schary, earning him, incidentally, the most notoriety as a playwright during his lifetime. He produced both the movie and the play versions, in addition to authoring the play after a career at MGM. The result of his efforts on the stage earned the play two Tony Awards in 1958. While it was a smashing success, Clancy Sigal, in an interview for the *Los Angeles Times* insists that "Schary substituted good intentions for good movies." It has also been said that Schary's autobiographical works are devoid of facts, that he was a Hollywood revisionist historian who put a spin on his career and the movie business consistent with his own productions. This comment may or may not be consistent with Dore Schary's own explanation of the work. He admits in the Forward of *Sunrise at Campobello* that the "facts" he uses to support his work are built on fragments of recalled conversation and family correspondence. Perhaps consequentially, the characters of the play, particularly FDR, are very predictable, sentimental creations, idyllic to a fault.

Critics have panned Schary's work for its superficiality. Clancy Sigal asserts that although Schary knew that he was not challenging his audiences, the filmmaker had "neither the talent nor the imagination to really buck the system." He further calls Schary shrewd, the "Perfect Man in the Grey Flannel Suit who made gray flannel movies for Holly-wood," tailoring his movies in response to the House Un-American Activities Committee, in favor of substance. There are others, however, who disagree. Deborah Dash Moore comments on Schary's career in the *Dictionary of American Biography,* describing a playwright who "repeatedly clashed with Mayer, arguing that 'movies must reflect what is going on in the world.'"

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Kryhoski is currently working as a freelance writer. She has taught English literature in addition to English as a second language overseas. In this essay, Kryhoski considers the influence of history on the characterization of women in the play.

Dore Schary's *Sunrise at Campobello* is an historical work documenting a period in FDR's life of great personal struggle. Upon further examination, the work appears to be a series of stereotypes rather than actual depictions of the Roosevelts, seemingly idealized forms based on social dictates and historical events Schary may or may not have been subconsciously responding to. On another level, it is a document of those twentieth-century stereotypes feminists have tried so hard to overcome and continue to do so yet today. In Schary's depiction of FDR's wife, Eleanor, one can see a huge rift forming between those images of the modern female ideal and those of Eleanor. She, at least for purposes of the overall work, is not just the future first lady but the ideal woman, keeper of the feminine mystique.

It is hard to ignore the image FDR's wife projects in the text, particularly since she figures prominently in the play, as evidenced by her dialogue. Eleanor is the stereotypical example of the perfect wife, one publicly embraced in America until the advent of public opinion expressed by those who dared to challenge it in the 1960s. Schary describes her as a young, stately, willowy thirty-six-year-old woman, who apparently wears her age well as the mother of five. The author initially shows her in action, supervising the children, arranging dinner, and anxiously awaiting her husband to discuss the day's events. Eleanor also seems to respond to her husband, anticipating his every need. When FDR winces, complaining of back pain, Eleanor immediately excuses him from dinner, stating, "you get into bed. I'll bring you a tray." She is subservient to her husband, so intently focused on his needs that she seems to anticipate or even intuit his every act. Of course, personal intimate relationships develop this quality to some degree over time, but Schary goes to great pains to create a female character that is consistent to a fault in her response to her husband.

If Eleanor had to be described, it would be in terms of good old-fashioned family values. When FDR claims his friend should not burn incense for fear "he'd have the entire place smelling like a bawdy house," Eleanor is quick to scold him for openly speaking of her home as one vulgar or lewd in character, as if her husband were speaking with extreme profanity. Her wisdom, the audience discovers, comes not from personal experience or a deep personal place, in this instance, but from the Bible, reinforcing not only a dependence on texts to assert herself but also the idea of the model, virtuous wife—the good girl. In several instances, she resorts to biblical passages to advise her husband. Telling him to take it easy in his recovery, she says, "A patient man shall bear for a time and afterward joy shall spring up unto him." Despite her wise choice of passages, FDR still remains the driving intellectual force in their conversations, correcting her for her mistakes. "Shall spring up unto us," scolds FDR. Eleanor may be an important figure in her husband's life, but she is not the dominant force, as Schary is careful to establish.

In fact, Eleanor defers not only to her husband for support but also to Howe and other male figures. When the plans are made for FDR's transport, Howe assumes a dominant role, traveling with FDR while instructing Eleanor to "cross with the children" in a separate boat. Further, the trip to New York was a result of intervention, again by another male figure, known only as Uncle Fred, who insists on flying in an additional doctor in order for Franklin to take advantage of a second opinion. Men seem to be running the show, dominating the play as proactive decision-makers, but in their decision-making, representing those characters who are "in the know."

Howe also takes a dominant role in a tense moment during which Eleanor breaks down in front of her children. When Eleanor begins to cry uncontrollably, Missy takes the children out of the room and rushes to get Mr. Howe. Upset and seemingly irrational, Eleanor shouts at Howe, and he diffuses the situation by telling her that she deserves a good cry. This comment is all that is needed to snap Eleanor out of the intense crying jag. Although there is no evidence to support her impressions, Eleanor pulls herself together, or "gets a hold of herself," describes Schary of the action. Her almost instantaneous resumption of her own composure, she shares, is because she has "terrified the children," and, horrified by her emotional display, resolves never to lose her composure again, "not ever." Again, Eleanor is responding to an ideal, that of the reserved, selfless housewife. Any indulgence in her feelings, for Eleanor, takes away from her stature in the family as one who is counted on to "hold it all together," to maintain the affairs of the household on a domestic level with grace and ease. Of considerable note is the role Missy assumes in ushering the children out of the room. Instead of instructing them to leave on their own so that she can stay behind and comfort Eleanor, she calls on Howe for direction. She does not attempt to comfort Eleanor, but instead defers to Howe for direction.

What is also curious about Schary's work, in a broader sense, is the way in which all of the women in FDR's life seem to be consumed with his illness, if not with him, without really ever expressing any personal thoughts, feelings, or ambitions independent of such circumstances. Sara, FDR's mother, is too busy nosing around behind the scenes in an effort to sway her son's decision against pursuing a career in politics in favor of returning home to rest. Missy admits that the thought of her boss as an invalid is enough to send her into tears at times. Eleanor sacrifices everything for her husband. She dutifully embarks on a public speaking career, regardless of her insecurities about it, simply to be the "eyes and ears" for her husband, as well as his voice, at Democratic conventions. When asked about her public appearances, Howe talks of Eleanor as if she is a bubble-headed schoolgirl: "Your wife has almost rid herself of those ridiculous giggles, and she even manages to make a point now and then with some measure of effectiveness."

It is in the presentation of the nosy, overbearing mother, the weepy and devoted secretary, and especially Eleanor that women play a perfunctory, or routine, role in the context of Schary's work. They are not the movers and shakers. They are not the key decision-makers. They are seemingly only as empowered as the men in their lives allow them to be. It is not clear that Eleanor would be participating in public speaking engagements if it were not out of a necessity to support her husband. It is also equally

unclear if Sara would be such a driving force in FDR's life had she not inherited a sizeable sum by marriage. Sara also relinquishes control of her son's political decisions again at the end of the play with very little thought, despite earlier convictions to the contrary. Schary has effectively deflated Sara, reducing her earlier convictions to trivialities. Clearly, women in the play merely accessorize the lives of the men they encounter.

The idea that the play is so clearly representative of a more chauvinistic view of women does not necessarily give the female reader reason to be offended. Schary's depictions are a function of the time during which he wrote, which was in the late 1950s. Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, in response to repressive social roles renewed during the postwar 1950s. Friedan called the postwar conviction that women's lives be linked exclusively to domesticity, to their families and homes, the feminine mystique, hence the title for her work. Schary lived through these postwar years and was even invited to defend himself during the McCarthy era for hiring employees with communist leanings.

Ruth Rosen, in her work *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America,* asserts that as a result of the anti-Communism movement, American women could be mobilized without ever having to leave home. She adds, "the belief that American superiority rested on its booming consumer culture and rigidly defined gender roles became strangely intertwined with Cold War politics." McCarthyism discouraged the power of dissenter by labeling such persons Communists—in a word, if you did not agree with the propaganda machine, you were automatically labeled a communist sympathizer. In this climate, then, proposes Rosen, gender issues were glossed over, instead becoming highly politicized. Women who did not marry were ostracized, labeled as sick or even selfish for their single state. During the McCarthy years, some viewed single women as deviants, accusing them of homosexual or communist leanings. In general, Hollywood scripts, adds Rosen, fostered the ideal of marriage over career, making an unmarried woman "an embarrassment." It stands to reason, then, that Schary was reacting to such stereotypes, if not pressured by them. And, if his critics are correct, if he did tone down his movies in an effort to keep his productions afloat during the McCarthy era, then it makes perfect sense the filmmaker would purposely meet the status quo for his female characters to avoid being blacklisted by the government.

It is difficult to believe that Dore Schary's Eleanor in *Sunrise at Campobello* actually mirrors values for women as recently as 1958. Even more shocking is the span of time during which such values held steadfast. It is easily conceivable that Eleanor would be the same work of fiction had she been created back in the twenties. In this way, however, the work is a wonderful account of what women's lives were like, even in the most idyllic plots. There is value in scrutinizing the not-so-distant past, in order to realize how far women have come in making the journey of liberation a reality today, and how far must still be traveled.

Source: Laura Kryhoski, Critical Essay on *Sunrise at Campobello,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

Trudell is a freelance writer with a bachelor's degree in English literature. In the following essay, Trudell discusses the techniques Schary uses to convince the audience that FDR was a political hero.

In his forward to the published version of *Sunrise at Campobello*, Dore Schary writes that he carefully researched the historical conditions of the play down to "fragments of remembered dialogue that might cue me to the way [FDR] talked in private conversation during the period." He even read a final draft of the play to Eleanor Roosevelt, with the intention of correcting what was untrue to the family's actual situation. But, Schary did not write a realist play, one that focuses on the everyday events and details of the characters' lives. Instead of providing a glimpse into the daily life of the Roosevelts, he carefully constructed *Sunrise at Campobello* to be an idealistic representation of heroism.

It is difficult to find a real political hero. Politicians have a bad reputation for a reason; innumerable compromises and maneuvering are necessary to please their supporters. But, FDR's integrity and heroism are not topics for exploration or doubt in the play; Schary specifically designs his work so the image of FDR would rise above specific political issues and controversies. As the playwright wrote in his autobiography, *Heyday*, he already had experience as the chairman of the "Hollywood for Roosevelt" committee, which tried, through film, to sway public opinion in favor of the Democratic Party. Schary has a political agenda in this play as well: to cast FDR in the most idealistic possible light.

He produces these conditions for FDR and succeeds in writing a popular play, mainly through the old and tested conventions of heroic writing. Beginning with a glimpse at the future president's very loving family, Schary intends the audience to grow to admire and even idolize FDR. He wants his theatergoers, by the end of *Sunrise at Campobello*, to weep and cheer for the president as if the playhouse really were a political convention. In the form of a proud remembrance and a tribute to the eventual triumph of the United States over the Great Depression, the play creates an icon for modern heroism. Schary uses the literary techniques of heroic drama to accomplish this goal. As Brooks Atkinson writes in his 1958 *New York Times* review, Mr. Schary's play "takes FDR out of the realm of facts, controversies, and politics and places him on the heroic level."

It is no coincidence that Schary immediately shows that the developing hero casts himself as Marc Antony when the family reads Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar;* Antony is the eloquent and noble hero of the play, and he eventually falls into a position of great political power. The playwright shows a cultured, busy, and idealized American household in which the father, and future president, is a grand and fearless leader. And, like Antony, FDR is characterized not only as a great hero but a humble and loyal man upon whom this power falls without any sly ambition.

This concept of pride is extremely important in heroic writing. From Homer's *The Odyssey* to Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn,* heroes typically must develop a sense of humility and modesty, or they will be in a great deal of trouble. Such a literary convention allows the reader to identify with the hero and makes him or her feel that anyone could rise to fame and glory. Schary, very aware of the tradition, is careful to make FDR appropriately humble in the first scene of the play; when FDR reads the newspaper, he says, "It's a pleasure to open a paper and see my name out of it." Later in the play, Schary carefully allows Sara to present the danger of ambition such as Teddy Roosevelt's: "Your Cousin Teddy died because of ambitious people around him."

Clearly, some pride is necessary for a hero to go forward in the world; as idealized as Schary makes this portrait of FDR, *Sunrise at Campobello* does not pretend that the future president has no ambition. Pride must strike a careful balance with temperance and humility before the play is over. Perhaps most important to learning this temperance are the women in *Sunrise at Campobello*; Sara and Eleanor are vital influences in this drama. Heroic literature will often employ a chaste and pure woman to humble her husband or son and direct him to greatness. Most often, women will either play this role (like Sara's motherly attempt to direct FDR's life away from the limelight), or that of a temptress who lures the hero away from his quest. Both roles usually provide difficulties for the hero's public agenda, which is why the heroic convention is often thought to be implicitly sexist. A woman in this tradition will seldom provide an active and helpful role in a heroic quest.

It is here that Schary departs slightly from the hero-making formula. Eleanor Roosevelt is not an obstacle to her husband's heroism; she is an extremely necessary part of his political success. She teaches him the necessary temperance of a hero more effectively than any other character, as FDR says in act two, scene two: "(*He pats her hand*) I had to learn something about the human heart. (*He smiles at her*) I've been learning." And she is an active politician herself; Eleanor grows between acts 2 and 3 from what Howe calls "learning" how to support her husband in various public venues, to "damned good at it." In fact, Eleanor not only teaches her husband how to rise out of his situation with integrity and humility, but also provides a vital solution to the problems caused by his physical handicap.

FDR's physical infirmity actually serves as a metaphor for learning the balance between ambition and modesty: "Eleanor, it's a hard way to learn humility; but I've been learning by crawling." Schary treats the president's handicap as completely necessary to the formation of his character. Homer's Achilles is perhaps the most famous example of this technique; the physical problem of Achilles's heel serves as a metaphor for other weaknesses, including pride. In FDR's case, the physical handicap is treated as a huge weight thrust upon him through no fault of his own. As is seen at the end of act 2 with FDR's dramatic attempt to rise from his wheelchair, such a crisis is only overcome gradually, painfully, and with a great deal of heroism.

In fact, FDR's restriction to a wheelchair and his battle to rise out of it are metaphors for the more general American experience of economic rise. In another attempt to make the reader identify with the hero, Schary uses a physical metaphor for the political and

economic struggle of the country; America was suddenly reduced to an economic wheelchair with the 1929 stock market crash and only gradually did it rise to be an economic superpower by the time Schary wrote the play in 1958. The Great Depression and World War II, like infantile paralysis, are fatalistic and seemingly unsolvable events to be struggled against heroically, and the appropriateness of this metaphor is chiefly important to the playwright's agenda. For evidence of this political metaphor, look to some of the more overt economic references in the play. Local villagers arrive (somewhat unnecessarily) to carry FDR out of his house on a stretcher. They are "*dressed in dungarees, sweaters and clothing typical of coastal towns,*" and the image of such common men helping the future president move is a poignant one. Schary intends his audience to feel that FDR is going through a parallel struggle to their parents, and that the ordinary working-class citizen was vital to his success.

Schary is thereby very successful in relating FDR's handicap to his most prominent political platform: comprehensive government programs to deal with poverty and unemployment among the working class. Images such as that of FDR on a stretcher are extremely important methods by which the playwright can succeed in making an already popular president seem like a legend. They are private battles that are meant to represent the larger public battles of FDR's four terms in office.

Locating the drama in the figurative sunrise of his public persona, or the private moment just before FDR's political career begins, allows Schary more creative freedom to develop his hero. The issues that took place during Roosevelt's presidency would have been much more familiar ground for the audience, who would mostly likely already have developed their opinions of the subjects. As the play stands, Schary is able to subtly address issues such as the opposition to Al Smith's Catholicism, or FDR's own financial interests in oil, for example, without finding himself bogged down in the complex politics of Roosevelt's four terms. The playwright suggests FDR's unconditional integrity without placing him in overly taxing political situations; the tension is in his private struggle with illness and the sacrifices in his personal life. Schary combines the already heroic public image of the former president with his own fictionalization of the other side of the story, the man behind the public spotlight. Combining both of these sides is what makes possible the creation of a hero.

Indeed, the transition from the private to the public is an extremely important and skillful progression in *Sunrise at Campobello*. Beginning with an intimate family setting that is just busy and turbulent enough to be realistic, Schary gradually brings the audience further and further into the public world. By act 2, the Roosevelts have moved from the remote New Brunswick summer lodge to New York City. Although there is still the warm sense of domesticity, a secretary is in their midst and there begins to be much more active discussion of politics and business. Mr. Howe begins to have a more prominent role, and by scene three, FDR is confronting his mother about his ambitious political plans. In act three, FDR gets closer to his famous ten-step walk in Madison Square Garden by entertaining more high-profile guests and revealing that he is more actively plotting political endeavors. In the final scene, Schary finally turns completely to the public image of FDR, and his emergence from private life is complete. This is a hero's

emergence, complete with the deafening cheers of the 1924 convention. Schary's play has moved completely from the specific and personal, into the realm of the legendary.

Source: Scott Trudell, Critical Essay on *Sunrise at Campobello,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #3

DeFrees has a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Virginia as well as a law degree from the University of Texas, and she is a published writer and an editor. In the following essay, DeFrees discusses playwright Schary's use of a simple plot line and a biographical tale to expound on the universal notion of perseverance in the face of personal trials.

What shapes a leader? The United States presidents often seem to stand isolated from the events of their personal lives. But, in looking at a president, what brings a leader to the grand circumstance of running for the highest office of his country? Perseverance, of course, but there must be something more. When that something more is as extraordinary as the personal conditions that shaped Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR) political life, the tale becomes almost epic. In Dore Schary's three-act play, *Sunrise at Campobello*, he distills the epic into a specific time period of FDR's life, thereby humanizing FDR and bringing him closer to his public. What is extraordinary about Schary's play is not the plot—that was preordained by real-life events—but rather, Schary's ability to evince FDR's resolve, his will to survive, without sentimentalizing his characters.

As Schary stated in 1958 in his introduction to the play, "the characters were almost fiction-like in their dramaturgical potential." A man stricken with a deadly disease obliterates despair and sallies forth, unwilling to allow the tragedy to get the best of him. His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, a devoted wife and mother, is forced to break out of her shy shell and face the world as a public figure. Louie McHenry Howe, FDR's closest friend and political advisor, stands relentlessly by FDR throughout the ordeal, vowing to see his earlier claim that FDR would be president come true. FDR's equally faithful secretary, Missy, endures the brunt of his mood swings as he seeks to find a balance between his pain and his hope. Sara Delano Roosevelt, FDR's stubborn mother, worries about his stamina and relentlessly tries to convince him to retire to the country for a quieter life; FDR's children, who are all with him when he contracts polio, quietly strive to support him in the intervening days. The characters could almost write themselves, much as the events did. But, in Schary's hands, the play became more than simply a portrait of a man with great strength of character—*Sunrise at Campobello* is a portrait of a family, a story that traverses the line dividing the rich and famous from the common working man and portrays a real-life everyman.

The play is a biopic about a specific period in FDR's life: it covers the three years from August 10, 1921, the day FDR contracted polio, to June 26, 1924, when he walks twenty feet from his wheelchair to a podium to deliver the nominating speech for Al Smith as the Democratic nominee for the 1924 United States presidential election. There was a strong stigma against individuals with handicaps in the early twentieth century—most were considered invalids and confined to the home, and were certainly not considered for positions of leadership. However, FDR had positioned himself in the spotlight of politics years earlier—at the age of 39, when he contracted polio, he had

already worked as a lawyer, served as Secretary of the Navy for President Woodrow Wilson, and run unsuccessfully for vice president on the 1920 Democratic ticket.

In short, politics was FDR's life. Like an athlete, he trained for and dreamed about his goals of political ambition with relentless enthusiasm, despite occasional moments of doubt. Schary deftly intimates this doubt and dedication in both FDR's conversations with his wife, his mother, and Mr. Howe, as well as in the wordless moments in the play when FDR struggles to move beyond the debilitations of his illness. Early in the evening of the night he falls ill, FDR says to his wife, "confi-dentially, Mrs. R., the light on my political horizon appears rather dim and dark. There is nothing as unattractive to a party as a defeated candidate." But, in the same conversation, he notes, in response to his wife's questioning his decision to work at a "Wall Street job," that he battled through the travails of Tammany Halls, worked for the Navy Department for seven years, and fought against his mother's "massive objection" to work in politics, and that, if he had endured all of that, "Wall Street will not corrupt my political convictions." FDR lets his guard down only with his wife and Howe, his confidant; to the rest of the world, and often to himself, his resolve is built of steel. In FDR's absence, Howe points out to FDR's mother, who is equally resolved to have him retire to a quiet life at their country estate, "I've heard Franklin say that in public service a man must be prepared to spend and be spent. He may not be willing to accept a sedentary life in the country." FDR seconds this opinion when he speaks to his mother a few weeks later and silences her complaints.

In FDR's language, the audience hears resolve thickening; he moves from unarticulated dreams, spoken through vague statements about political ambition and democratic ideals; to expressions of rage and admission of periods of doubt about his recovery; and finally, to a language of very personal resolve. In the beginning of the play, he says that he is relieved, for once, not to see his name in the paper among all the bad news and then quotes Woodrow Wilson, "'It is only once in a generation that a people can be lifted above material things. That is why conservative government is in the saddle for two-thirds of the time.'" FDR understands the importance of political goodness, but through others' words. Then, after FDR has begun to recover, during a quiet moment with his wife, he states:

> Eleanor, I must say this—once to someone. Those first few days at Campobello when this started, I had despair—deep, sick despair. . . . I turned to my faith, Babs—for strength to endure. I feel I have to go through this fire for some reason. Eleanor, it's a hard way to learn humility—but I've been learning by crawling. I know what is meant—you must learn to crawl before you can walk.

FDR is still quoting others, but he has found a personal reverberation in the proverb. Still later, he admits to Eleanor that, before the illness, he'd been "snobbish," "haughty," and "sauced with ambition." He finds purpose in his illness and explains that he had "to learn something about the human heart. . . . I've been learning." Finally, he seeks to

silence his mother once and for all in her vitriolic stance against his re-entry into politics and against his friendship with Howe, his closest political friend. FDR tells his mother that Mr. Howe had told him, as he was recuperating from polio, that he had two choices: either to become a country squire, or "get up and become President of the United States." FDR admits that Howe's dream may be too farfetched, but at the same moment, he also explains he has no plans of "retiring to Hyde Park and rusticating." His mother balks and argues that Teddy Roosevelt died because he did not understand that "you can't make it the same world for all people." FDR immediately responds: "Maybe we can't. But it seems to me that every human has an obligation in his own way to make some little stab at trying." FDR grows stronger in his resolve as their conversation escalates into a full-blown argument, and he finally ends his mother's retorts with, "That's enough. There'll be no more talking—no more." The second act then ends with FDR left by himself, trying to stand up from his wheelchair using his crutches. He falls, painfully, but the curtain closes on him stubbornly pulling himself back into his chair and placing the crutches before him to try once again. He is determined to succeed.

FDR's convictions in the democratic party, and his belief in himself, emerge as consistent themes in his road to recovery. *Sunrise at Campobello*—the title itself emphasizing, not the evening that he contracted polio, but a morning, a dawning of a new political life—is a deeply patriotic play because it follows the path of a man who represents the best of what it means to be an American: strong, egalitarian, and deeply determined. When Roosevelt emerged in 1924 to deliver the nomination speech, having already stood in the public eye for years, rumors about his health had been rampant. What the public saw on that day, however, was a dignified, hearty man walk to the podium and deliver a resounding speech for the Democratic Party. The events that preceded that speech, and how those events shaped the life FDR was to lead in the succeeding years, is the crux of *Sunrise at Campobello*. It is a journey through the private days of a very public figure and serves as a testament not just to FDR, but to his spirit of hope and faith in the notion of perseverance. In Doris Kearns Goodwin's Pulitzer Prizewinning history, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II,* she quotes Eleanor Roosevelt as saying, "I think probably the thing that took most courage in his life was his mastery and his meeting of polio. I never heard him complain." In an article for *Time Magazine,* Goodwin offers the following quotation from Frances Perkins on the post-polio FDR: "There had been a plowing up of his nature. The man emerged completely warm-hearted, with new humility of spirit and a firmer understanding of philosophical concepts." It is the story of Willy Loman and of John Proctor, of Hamlet and of Shylock—it is the tale of everyman at his very best.

Schary's play holds forth with a portrait of a man who, from the first moments he fell ill, looked fully to the future and determinedly saw success. What also quietly emerges from the play is a rich depiction of how the people closest to FDR had almost as much to do with his success as he did. Schary gives us not only a glimpse at Roosevelt's personal struggle; he rounds out the play with a portrayal of his wife's journey through this time, as she reluctantly dons the political hat and faces the public on behalf of her husband. She, too, appears as an extraordinary individual with moments of doubt, and it is the moments of doubt that imbue her with a humanity that allows the audience to relate to her, not as a celebrity, but as a woman. Eleanor is unfailingly supportive of her

husband; in his absence, the strain of her role becomes evident on several occasions. Most poignant, perhaps, is the evening she is reading to her children. She is exhausted, and upon finishing a verse of the story, she collapses in a torrent of tears. FDR's secretary ushers the children out of the room as Eleanor continues to sob. Howe quietly enters the room and tries to comfort her. He tells her that "nobody ever lived who is more entitled to a good cry," and she softens, tears ceasing. As quickly as she broke down in tears—and in doing so, related to every woman who ever struggled to support her husband and hold up the family spirit during a difficult time—she regains her composure, sure once again of her role and her ability to fulfill that role. "I must have terrified the children," she says to Howe. "I won't ever do that again. Not ever." She, too, has rooted herself in steel.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Schary lay, as with any biographical tale, in the fact that his audience knew the ending to his story. Without the promise of surprise in the final outcome, how could the author sustain the audience's interest? Just as Schary did: first, by choosing a lesser-known time period in a very famous life, but one that radically altered the way he led that life; and second, by showing conflict and uncertainty in the relationships between FDR and his family and friends, and their relationships with one another, as together they endured the uncertainty of FDR 's future. Today, Roosevelt is an acronym, a boulevard, a prominent figure in the American history textbooks. But to the people closest to him, and to Americans alive during the formative years of FDR's political life, he was a blossoming political figure whose life took a very uncertain turn. Schary shows, through the fights between Louis Howe and FDR's mother about the tenability of FDR's political life, a future that almost never was. He shows the humanity and humility behind the political portraits and public speeches, through FDR's relationships with his children and his ability to take responsibility when he behaves coarsely toward his daughter or his secretary. He is not infallible, but he is unbreakable in spirit.

Sunrise at Campobello is a deeply uplifting play because it depicts, through simple plot lines and straightforward dialogue, true triumph over tragedy. Even more so, it displays with brevity and sincerity a personal portrait of how man is able to control his destiny, to take the reigns of life, despite whatever challenges lie in the course ahead, and to focus on a goal and achieve it. Schary's simple plot is, in fact, anything but. It is a depiction of family ties, political aspiration, difficult circumstances overcome, and the tangible possibility of victory. In the late 1950s, at a time when the atomic bomb loomed over the future of America, Schary's play needed no lights and buzzers, or fantastical plot lines, but only a clear sense of purpose. Schary delivered, and five Tony Awards later, it seemed that the critics agreed.

Source: Allison Leigh DeFrees, Critical Essay on *Sunrise at Campobello,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Adaptations

Sunrise at Campobello was adapted as a film in 1962 by Schary and directed by Vincent J. Donehue, starring Ralph Bellamy, Greer Garson, and Hume Cronyn. It is available from Warner Brothers on VHS.

Topics for Further Study

In 1964, author Betty Friedan, in her book *The Feminine Mystique,* challenged the prevailing notion in the 1950s that women could only derive satisfaction as wives and mothers, any ambitions outside of this realm being unnatural. Consider the female characters of Schary's work within the ideological framework of the 1950s. How do these women either conform to or shatter the notion of the ideal woman?

At the center of FDR's struggles is the challenge he faces in overcoming infantile paralysis (polio). Beyond the physical difficulties he must champion, there is a social stigma connected with the illness as well. Examine the impact of polio on its victims, as well as on American society at large. How devastating was the disease? Why were Sara and others so desperately concerned about FDR appearing in public as an invalid? Further, do you think the same types of stigmas are placed on the physically handicapped today?

Dore Schary was producing the movie *The White Tower* in 1948 when it was said to have come under scrutiny for its communistic influence in the movie industry. Schary himself would testify that he hired people on the basis of ability rather than political ideology. Examine the McCarthy era in politics. What was the impact of the activities of McCarthy and others on production companies like MGM and RKO?

Much of the dialogue and events of the play have been reconstructed based on Dore Schary's research. Schary admits himself that some aspects of the play, as well as some of the characters, are reconstructed using only fragments of dialogue and portions of letters. Create a short story or play based on the life of an important public figure before he or she became famous. Based on what you know about this person, what would he or she say? How would this person respond to certain life crises?

When FDR surfaces publicly for the first time to make his way to New York, he smoothes over any discomfort both he and his family may be feeling and meets the event with humor. Instead of focusing on the possible unwanted attention he may receive, FDR makes light of the potential danger with Howe—"As Assistant Secretary of the Navy I used to rate a seventeen-gun salute. Have you arranged for that?" This good cheer serves to smooth over the tensions that most of those around him, including his children, are feeling.

More impressive still is FDR's refusal to let his paralysis become an excuse for him to remain aloof from public scrutiny. This issue figures prominently with his mother, who continually warns him of the disastrous consequences inherent for an invalid in living a life in the public eye. At the very least, those more supportive and those closest to him have been concerned he be successful at Madison Square Garden: for instance, Howe and Eleanor planned the logistics of his speech, right down to the calculation of actual steps to the podium on the platform. When Howe shares in his nervous excitement that "they are liable to be the ten biggest steps you ever took in your life," FDR responds,

humorously diffusing a tense situation, "Perhaps—or to be clinical—I may fall smack on my gluteus maximus."

Loneliness and Isolation

FDR's invalidism proves to isolate him, further fostering his sense of loneliness. In a moment alone with Eleanor, he shares these feelings with his wife and how they have changed the way in which he views himself, from someone actively able to participate in the events swirling about him to an envious bystander. "When you're forced to sit a lot—and watch others move about—you feel apart—lonely—because you can't get up and pace around," says FDR.

His inability to pace around causes him, by his own admission, to feel jealous towards others who "parade around all over" his office. The urge to scream at them to "sit down—quiet down—stand still," which FDR stifles, is simply a manifestation of his feelings of isolation, a perception built on the basis of his own physical inability to keep up with his peers. Because he feels alone, says FDR, "certain fears seek you out and hunt for a place in your mind." The idea of facing fire alone overwhelms him, for example, causing him to have nightmares about being trapped and unable to move.

In terms of the overall scope of the play, FDR struggles to overcome his feelings of loneliness and isolation as a function of his physical handicaps and wins at the end of the play, when his efforts to walk out onto the platform at Madison Square Garden end triumphantly. This single act earns him the respect and acceptance of his mother, his family, and more important, his Democratic constituency, closing the gap in public perception between FDR the invalid and FDR the man.

Social Status

The topic of social status figures prominently in the struggles between FDR and his mother, Sara. For FDR, the wealth and recognition that goes with the Roosevelt name carry negative connotations for him. In a world of wealth, he claimed to be "snobbish" and "haughty," drunk with ambition without purpose. His mother, however, encourages him to embrace a life of entitlement to avoid public embarrassment and humiliation as a result of his handicap, insisting, in one instance, that his boat trip to New York be "kept secret," to avoid placing her son "on exhibition."

Throughout the play, FDR resists his mother's insistence upon her son's taking charge of the family estate rather than pursuing a life of public scrutiny. Sara recalls a member of the Roosevelt family who "died because he didn't know when to stop—didn't know that you can't make it the same world for all people." FDR confronts her hypocrisy by pointing out her indifference, her attitude of "noblesse oblige," or grace towards the poor. "Yes—yes. . . . The poor will always be with us. We went through that when I sold the mining stock."

FDR also recognizes that a concern for appearances based on social status fuels her desire for his retreat to Hyde Park. He tells his mother as much, claiming, "At the

moment I'm not running from anything—and I won't until I can get around and stand up on my own two feet—but that doesn't mean I have to go into hiding." For Sara, social status and material wealth are not part of a duplicitous scheme; they are simply a means by which she can protect her son from further pain and humiliation.

Destiny

The inevitable, perhaps necessary, fate of FDR is a career in politics, as is reinforced in the comments of the characters and expressed in the greater context of the play, through FDR's struggle to overcome his paralysis. From the beginning of the play, this destiny is intimated, particularly by Eleanor and Howe. As FDR complains of the political climate of the country in act 1, his wife is quick to point out that Howe insists her husband "can reverse the trend," reinforcing the convictions of FDR's friend that he is destined for the presidency.

Howe is FDR's biggest advocate and is convinced not only of his friend's success but also that his political future is preordained by God. His devotion serves a greater function in the context of the overall play, as does Eleanor's. Their encouragement and unwavering belief in FDR's abilities prove to be valuable in several critical moments in the play. For example, after Sara's final assault on FDR's dreams, he expresses his doubts to Howe that he could "stand the gaff (abuse) of active work." Immediately, Howe tells him that "God has an eye" on his friend's future in politics.

When Eleanor is prompted to contribute her views, she also responds, telling FDR that he "should pursue principles without calculating the consequences." In this way, the momentum of FDR's political career is portrayed as more than a simple decision but as a choice based on the complexities of a challenging personal life.

Compare and Contrast

1950s: At the age of twenty, Al Kaline bats .340 in 1955, becoming the youngest player ever to win the American League batting championship.

Today: Barry Bonds hits his 72nd seasonal homer and rewrites baseball history by surpassing Mark McGwire's recent record, the best on the books since Roger Maris.

1950s: Playwright Arthur Miller writes *The Crucible,* a play that on the surface deals with the Salem witch trials of the seventeenth century and on another level criticizes the McCarthy communist witch hunts.

Today: The Vatican scrambles to respond to the fervor of public opinion in the wake of allegations of criminal sexual misconduct perpetrated by Catholic priests against young boys.

1950s: Democrat John F. Kennedy, a devout Roman Catholic, begins campaigning for the presidency, bringing the issue of religion to the political forefront.

Today: Robert F. Kennedy's eldest child, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Maryland lieutenant governor, is the first and only woman in the Kennedy family to pursue a political career.

What Do I Read Next?

The Crucible, first produced in 1953, is a play by one of Dore Schary's contemporaries, Arthur Miller. On the surface the play deals with the Salem witch trials of seventeenth-century New England. On a deeper level, however, the work is said to be an allegory of the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s.

FDR's Splendid Deception: The Moving Story of Roosevelt's Massive Disability—And the Intense Efforts to Conceal It from the Public (1999), by Hugh Gregory Gallagher, explores the attempts by those around FDR to hide his disability and how Gallagher's discovery of such historical facts impacted his own life as a former polio patient and historian.

A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Math Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash (1998), by Sylvia Nasar, is the story of a mathematical genius who slipped into madness at age thirty but, with the help of one woman and the encouragement of the math community, emerged from mental illness to win the Nobel Prize.

In Our Own Words: Extraordinary Speeches of the American Century was edited and published by Senator Robert Torricelli and Andrew Car-roll. A collection of speeches from the "famous and infamous," this work serves as an oratorial history, expressed by poets, politicians, artists, sports figures, preachers, humorists, and the like. The collection includes a speech given by FDR explaining why an otherwise apathetic nation should defend the world against Nazism.

First Ladies: An Intimate Group Portrait of White House Wives (1995) was written by Margaret Truman, daughter of former President Harry S. Truman. The author explores what it means to be a first lady by sharing the stories of several women in the White House throughout history and up to the present day. The work covers the lives of several first ladies, including Eleanor Roosevelt.

Further Study

Davis, Ronald L., *Van Johnson: MGM's Golden Boy,* University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

This work covers the rise and fall of Van Johnson, Hollywood's "golden boy" during Hollywood's "golden age." This work offers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Hollywood during the time Dore Schary headed up MGM pictures.

Fried, Albert, ed., *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare,* Oxford University Press, 1996.

This book covers the period of the late 1940s to the mid-1960s when Americans were routinely persecuted for their lack of patriotism or their sympathy for the Soviet Union. The author demonstrates the absurdity of the times, using speeches, court decisions, letters, memoirs, and so forth as strong supporting evidence.

Schary, Dore, *For Special Occasions,* Random House, 1962.

This text is an account of Dore Schary's childhood and his parents' catering business.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama 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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