

The Secret Knowledge: On the Dismantling of American Culture Study Guide

The Secret Knowledge: On the Dismantling of American Culture by David Mamet

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Plot Summary

David Mamet is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter. His most famous work, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, was both a successful play and movie. Like many Jews of his time, David was raised as a Liberal Democrat. As time passed, Mamet began to question his Liberal roots. He questioned why Liberals seemed to support the "Arab cause," and applied a moral equivalency to the conflict between the Arabs and Israelis.

After identifying most of his life with Democratic and Liberal tenets, in his later years he completely transformed into a Conservative. He felt that the policies of Conservatives more closely followed the ideas laid out in the US Constitution. Further, he came to the conclusion that if the Liberals were allowed to gain control over the government for an extended period of time, it would be the ruination of the country. After coming to his own reckoning about the political landscape, Mamet decided to put his very strong views down in writing. As he indicated, according to the Constitution, it is every citizen's right to do so.

Mamet focuses on the differences between the Conservatives, or the Right, and the Liberals, or the Left. In Mamet's view, the Left views the role of government as a body that is responsible for the protection of the weak and one that will lead everyone to the Promised Land. Liberals want to be the playground referee who will make everything fair and equal. Mamet disparages the Liberal attitudes by demonstrating how they lack substance and depend upon demagoguery and fear tactics to lure people into their camp. Voting for "hope and change" is the same as voting for a balloon—there is nothing inside except hot air.

A sizable portion of *The Secret Knowledge* is devoted to the administration and policies of President Barack Obama. Mamet pulls no punches in referring to President Obama as a Socialist and Marxist. He criticizes the president for everyday sending signals to the rest of the world that the United States is surrendering and is up for grabs to its opponents. He derides Obama for intervening in the US car industry. In Mamet's opinion, the US car manufacturing industry should have failed or succeeded on its own in the free market of Capitalism.

Mamet provides brief glimpses of his childhood and the discrimination he and his family faced in the US as Jews. Despite the obstacles, everyone in his family attended college and had successful lives. Their achievements were not bestowed upon them; rather, they worked hard for them. They lived the American dream which is only possible in an environment that is free and unimpeded by government intervention. Liberals want to gain power so that everyone can be proclaimed to be the same and so they can make everything "fair." Mamet points out that the fundamental problem with the Liberal view is that government cannot legislate "fairness."



Chapters 1 through 4

Chapters 1 through 4 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1: The Political Impulse

The political impulse originates from a natural urge to bring order to social relations. In the 2008 election, Republicans supported the concepts of fiscal conservatism, lower taxes and a strong military. The Democrats espoused the concept that "change" itself was a solution. The Right's view on security included armament while the Left felt that ultimate security would be found in peaceful solutions. Justice was seen by the Right as strict adherence to laws and Liberals saw justice as an increase in civil rights.

As a young writer, Mamet abhorred capitalism and wrote about it in such plays as "Glengarry Glen Ross" and "American Buffalo." Like many of his contemporary writers who were anti-business, they expressed their feelings in the written word and were paid for it in the free market which they ostensibly detested. Neither Capitalism nor Communism is ideal. Capitalism leads to inequality but it does not lead to starvation.

The pursuit of justice inevitably leads to injustice. Saving the trees starves the loggers and raises the price of construction. Milton Friedman lamented that a country that put a man on the moon could surely provide lunches for the school children. But it was because the US put a man on the moon that they could not feed the school children.

Mamet's political play, *Waiting for Godot*, was at first panned by liberals and praised by conservatives. Mamet had explained it as his departure from being a brain-dead liberal. After that he was asked to write a political book which turned out to be this one, *The Secret Knowledge*.

Chapter 2: The American Reality

It was not until age 60 that Mamet first met with conservatives. His rabbi loaned him a book entitled *White Guilt* by Shelby Steele. One theme of the book was that people had a choice between hearing what they wanted to hear or hearing the truth. Mamet began to see that Liberals wanted to restrict others but not themselves.

Chapter 3: Culture, School Shootings, the Audience, and the Elevator

Culture predates society and is comprised of rules—rather conscious or sub-conscious—that become a part of the actions and reactions of its members. The misconception about multiculturalism is that reason or logic can supplant centuries of cultural thinking and behavior. Culture is the foundation of society.

An error of Socialism is to believe that the human mind can devise a way of living that is superior to centuries of a conglomeration of tried and true attempts discovered through the interaction of human beings who wanted something from each other and adapted to



each other's needs. Those who find themselves confined in an audience together or in an elevator together figured out that they must tolerate one another to get along.

The frequency of school shootings may stem from the uncertainty that is intrinsic in the modern curriculum which includes social studies, multiculturalism and other subjects that lack substance and fail to offer an emotionally disturbed child the structure he needs. A liberal education has proven to be an extension of "bad high school." The pursuit of a liberal college education is a waste of time and money in that what can be taken from the experience is not marketable and has no relevance to the real work force.

Chapter 4: Alcatraz

Society promotes transition and advancement. Alcatraz was a federal prison—now it's a tourist attraction. In show business, an assistant cameraman watches the director of photography for years, preparing for the day he will assume that position. While college has benefits, it also delays the entry into society of the adolescent.

Society supports a view of history and events that is untrue. For example, Thomas Jefferson was praised as a founder of our country yet in reality he was an adulterer and a slave owner. Che Guevara was praised as an advocate of the people yet he was a mass murderer. Charles Manson was a mass murderer but is not revered. The difference is that Che Guevara is presented as seeking power for the people, not for personal gain—whether true or not that is the image and legend that has been created around him and thus, to Liberals, his crimes were excusable.

Being kind is measured by its ramifications and one's personal motivation for being kind. Liberals say capitalism is bad but most have no problem with the capitalism that provides food, clothing and shelter and provides jobs and income. Racism and bias are seen differently depending on who is on the receiving end of discrimination. A society is successful when it does not sweep problems under the carpet and recognizes problems that exist and emerge as a result.



Chapters 5 through 8

Chapters 5 through 8 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 5: Lost Horizon

The Liberal Arts students of decades ago were able to get entry jobs in the market place. But in today's economy, those entry level jobs are non-existent and the Liberal Arts graduates are fundamentally unskilled and unable to attain higher employment. These individuals were taught by their liberal parents that they were too good to perform manual labor and would not think of becoming electricians or mechanics. What has resulted is a plethora of meaningless jobs such as "life" consultants, feng shui experts and the like.

There is a stampede of these unskilled individuals into film schools because it is an acceptable pursuit and it is not "work" per se. Like *The Lost Horizon*, by John Hilton, these liberal youths picture a perfect world without disease or stress and where all inhabitants are artists and philosophers. Only mid-way through the story does the protagonist, Hugh Conway, realize that he was chosen to be in a perfect land because of his readiness to believe in it.

Chapter 6: The Music Man

Economist Dambisa Moyo makes the observation that aid to a developing country actually impedes that development. The aid keeps the people of the country from advancing and allows those who exploit the country's natural resources and other interests to profit from the inability of the country to benefit from them. How long do the descendents of slaves suffer from that legacy? Is it "racist" to expect these individuals to perform to the best of their abilities?

People can be led in a direction that is not ultimately beneficial to them. Does Freud provide both the cure and the disease? Listerine sold not only mouthwash, they sold the horror of having halitosis. While Obama's campaign of "hope" and "change" was heralded as the new New Deal, it could more accurately be compared to the main character in the musical *The Music Man*, who convinced a town to follow him after he manufactured a huge problem about the youth of the town. Although life was fine in the town, he persuaded them that there was "Trouble," in River City.

Chapter 7: Choice

A group that knows nothing of the world's history plopped in an isolated area on earth has one factor that keeps it together: they take comfort in their shared denial of reality. For the reality to perpetuate, those in the group who question it must be silenced or even killed. Individual advancement is suppressed. The group will create its own cultures—its traditions and taboos. If religion does not evolve, other replacements that represent God such as multiculturalism, environmentalism and the like will emerge.



They may create a fear like "global warming," to keep everyone engaged and frightened.

The denial of reality is one of the reasons the Left embraces socialism. It is a religion in itself and like any religion its followers must adhere to its basic foundation. The philosophy of the Left is a rejection of wisdom. The Left ascribes to a sharing of wealth but fails to answer the fundamental question of where that wealth came from. The answer is that it came from the hard work and enterprise of others but Liberals see it as "manna from heaven." (43) The left is naïve in their anti-war beliefs, thinking that the enemies are reasonable and will see it our way if we just talk to them.

The Bible contains the wisdom from which the laws and the traditions of the West originate. Society, thus, deals with inequality and injustice and provides the parameters for societal behavior. Liberals support a culture in which there are no consequences for one's behavior. Instead of voting for substance, Liberals feel comfortable making a choice for "change and hope."

Chapter 8: The Red Sea

Perhaps the parting of the Red Sea did not symbolize the unity of mankind; rather, it may have been intended to distinguish its diversity. There is good and evil as well as the moral and the immoral. The freedom to choose and be distinguished is an element of freedom. It is the Left that supports Socialism which embraces the herd mentality of slavery, the opposite of freedom. The State of Israel is an affront to the Left because it is the epitome of choice. Socialism is a return not to the tribe but to the the herd.



Chapters 9 through 12

Chapters 9 through 12 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 9: Chicago

Mamet was born and raised in Chicago which at the time was a very rough city. There was something alluring about the infamous dirty politics of the city. He has mused that he'd rather deal with a crooked cop than a bureaucrat. He was schooled by a culture which included liberal leaders like Mayor Daly and State Senator Barack Obama. The culture of society could be summed up in one phrase, "That's how we do things in Chicago," the sub-text of which was not to dare question established conventions. The promise to the people for burying their heads in the sand was the promise that the government would take care of them.

White neighborhoods were treated better by the white mayor and the all-white city council. Mamet's family felt guilty about the treatment of the blacks and joined the NAACP in support of them. But Mamet's family was Jewish. What did his family have to feel guilty about? They had come to the country with nothing, had gone through the Holocaust and encountered many private clubs that they were not allowed to join. But the Left demands that the country continue to feel guilty about slavery that ended over a century ago.

Chapter 10: Milton Friedman Explained

As opposed to asking, "What are the decisions?" Milton Friedman posed the question: "Who makes decisions?" Should it be government or the individual who makes choices? It is appropriate for the government to make decisions in the areas of defense, justice and maintenance of infrastructure. Government should stay out of education, health and automobile manufacturing. The advantage that free enterprise has over the state is that it can more easily and effectively correct itself - reverse wrong decisions and rectify bad judgments.

Chapter 11: What is "Diversity?"

Many Liberal parents are hypocrites who boast about the diverse education they are exposing their children to. Yet, that same family will be seen dining in restaurants with people who look just like them. Some wealthy liberals wear shabby clothes from Good Will but drive off in their Porsches. A liberal education teaches children to dismantle and disparage a culture in which their family has thrived. Buying into the "change" that Obama has promised will cause the descent of the nation into socialism.

Chapter 12: The Monty Hall Problem and the Contractor

A mathematician friend of Mamet's explained how the odds, based on probability and perception, worked in the TV game show "Let's Make a Deal," hosted by Monty Hall. In



the show, contestants were asked to choose between Doors 1, 2 or 3 and they would win the prize located behind the door they chose. Mamet understood the responsibility of making choices when his architect allowed him to choose the method of paying for his services. In the end, Mamet was upset with the amount he had to pay the architect but he had made the choice and had to live with it.

There is much anger on the Left about the State of Israel and the case is often made by Liberals that there is a moral equivalency between the Jews and the Arabs in their disagreement about the Jewish state. But there's a glaring difference: The Jews want only to protect their borders and live in peace. The Arabs want to destroy Israel and claim the land.

There is no slavery in the United States but the liberals feel that the white population should feel guilty that it once existed. Is guilt inheritable? If the government is to apologize for the existence of slavery, should they also apologize for the white men of the Union Army who died trying to end slavery?



Chapters 13 through 16

Chapters 13 through 16 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 13: Maxwell Street

Just as the government should not interfere in education and medical care, it cannot pass legislation to make the people happy. Laws are made to be broken and they're even broken by the elected officials who made them. Although the Constitution gives the power to declare war to the Congress, Franklin Roosevelt declared war on Japan and then got Congress' approval. Since then, the president has assumed that power not from the Constitution or from legislation but rather from custom.

To Liberals, the government has the responsibility of protecting anyone who claims to be powerless. The Socialist vision of society, of taking care of the weak and downtrodden, only serves to curb creativity and human imagination. [Note: Maxwell Street is a famous street in Chicago, Mamet's hometown.]

Chapter 14: R100

British author Nevil Shute was also an aviation expert, an aircraft designer. In 1925, the government awarded him and a governmental department contracts to make rigid aircraft called zeppelins. Shute noted that the government was using heavier, more expensive and unsafe materials in constructing their aircraft. Shute's aircraft was referred to as the R100. Shute was certain that the government ship, the R101, was unsafe and not air worthy. He shared his opinion with the government who chose to ignore him. The R100 successfully completed a trans-Atlantic trip but the R101 crashed and burned after making it only 300 miles. The government abandoned the program.

Israel's economy flourished under the free market and West Germany's economy soared while East Germany's suffered until the fall of Communism. California taxed a thriving industry—filmmaking—out of the state. The reason the American car industry failed was that no one wanted its products. Conflicts with labor and management contributed to its demise. The federal government stepped in to save it but it should have been allowed to survive or fail in the free market.

Chapter 15: The Intelligent Person's Guide to Socialism and Anti-Semitism

It is difficult to understand why aid is given to Palestine when some of the money is funneled to terrorists whose main goal is to kill Israelis. Sympathy for the "Arab cause," provides a false feeling of solidarity among Liberals. Liberalism is a religion since most of its tenets cannot be proved and is based almost completely on blind faith. Liberals view themselves as compassionate and free-thinking. However, they are narrow and biased. They don't want to give up their country but they want the Israelis to give up theirs—all in the name of world peace. It is pure anti-Semitism.

Chapter 16: The Victim

The Liberal concern for the "victim" is merely an attempt to evoke a religious, spiritual feeling. The Left loves the Palestinians who are the perfect "victims." When six houses were destroyed in an incursion into Palestinian territory by the Israelis, it was depicted in Western media as, "The Rape of Jenin." A photo of a young boy portrayed as a victim was staged. Michelle Obama referred to her own country as "mean," obviously considering herself a victim of its venom. But she failed to acknowledge that nearly 400,000 Union soldiers died freeing the slaves.



Chapters 17 through 20

Chapters 17 through 20 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 17: Puritans

Liberals apply moral equivalency to all people and causes. A bumper sticker with a Christian cross, a star of David and a Muslim crescent and the single word, "Co-Exist," sends a message of peace and solidarity in America but really accomplishes nothing. In Iran, the occupants of such a vehicle would be kidnapped and beheaded. Liberals are obsessed with being politically correct. They do not want to offend. They are much like the Puritans who were expelled from England because their "good acts" were seen as contrived and nauseated everyone.

Chapter 18: The Noble Savage

The Left worships both the tribe and big government. The savage is in tune with nature and was uncorrupted until the white man came along and took his land. Somehow the Liberal believes that only big government can return man to nature, to the paradise he was meant to reside in. The only obstacles that stand between man's return to nature are greedy conservatives. Liberals believe that since the government is "good" and has only "good intentions" for man, the more power it is given the better.

Conservatives believe in the free market which is not a fantasy and which is a proven success. Big government is not magic and will not lead man back to Eden. It is as flawed as the human beings which run it.

Chapter 19: Adventure Slumming

Jane Fonda visited Hanoi and posed with the enemy of the US and a large gun, the type being used to bring down US planes. Had the gun been used against elephants or other animals, she would have been appalled. She figured her position (her famous father, her movie star status) would protect her but she had actually committed treason. Liberals often travel to enemies of their country and naively and eagerly believe the propaganda they are told. Liberals like Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave and others feel superior to their own countries.

Chapter 20: Cabinet Spiritualism and the Car Czar

"Magic thinking," brought about the Car Czar in the Obama administration. A czar is someone who can operate on a different level than elected officials and other appointees. What typically happens with this type of position is that it creates an organization that is worse than the bureaucracy it inherits. A "czar" position in the government brings to mind the Cabinet Spiritualists of the 19th century. They actually convinced a portion of the public that they could perform magic, miracles.

Homeland Security is an example of big government—the bigger the better. It is the largest sector of the government and is comprised of departments that were formerly separate operations. Modern liberal thinking supports the concept that laws can ensure that no one suffers or does without. A democracy is created with the intention of ensuring that no one suffers from the state which can only be accomplished by limiting the government's powers.



Chapters 21 through 24

Chapters 21 through 24 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 21: Rumpelstiltskin

It is amazing that Liberals believe that higher taxes and government intervention leads to a thriving economy although history proves the opposite to be true. The Obama administration refuses to accept the fact that the West is threatened by Islamic Fascism. Liberals have a world view that is not connected with reality. It is as though, like Rumpelstiltskin, they are asleep. The impact of liberal policies will result in the destruction of our culture. They are destroying society in the name of doing good.

Chapter 22: My Father, Al Sharpton, and the Designated Criminal

Al Sharpton wants reparations for African Americans for the days their ancestors spent as slaves. He also complains about hair salons in black communities being owned largely by Asians. Is an activist like Sharpton genuinely interested in helping the black community or is he just self-promoting? It is Mamet's opinion that Obama sends the message everyday that America has surrendered and is ready to be taken over by our enemies. By denigrating our culture, these black leaders are weakening its foundation. Instead of lamenting about Asians taking over the salons, Sharpton should be urging African Americans to open their own shops. Mamet's father only finished two years of community college before he bluffed his way into law school. By not allowing the citizens to keep their money instead of taxing it, the country isn't allowed to thrive. The destruction is from external sources as well as from within. The United Nations destroys the image of America by identifying the nation as the number one criminal of the world.

Chapter 23: Greed

Greed is a sin according to the Ten Commandments. But ambition is different than greed. In the liberal view, those who take more than their "fair share," should be punished. But what is one's "fair share"? Fairness is impossible to legislate. It calls for a judgment of each individual case which is an absurd concept. Taxes are a way the government generates revenues and are based on proportions of earnings which is considered fair.

There was outrage after the recent housing collapse that it wasn't "fair" that predatory lenders approved loans for people who eventually were unable to pay their mortgages. But no one forced the loans on the people. It was their responsibility to determine whether they could afford the loan payments or not. This mindset also implies that the borrowers were not intelligent enough to recognize a bad deal. Part of the foundation of a free society is to take risk, to take a chance to succeed and gain. It is not possible to speculate what is in someone else's heart. If a person does well, he should be recognized and congratulated—not judged to be greedy.

Chapter 24: Arrested Development

Teaching a drama course, Mamet encountered students who didn't want the villain of a story to be an Arab. Hadn't they been denigrated enough? Another student suggested that homosexuals should be seen kissing on stage as often as possible. Liberal education has fostered a concern with identity politics—the practice of indicting and assaulting others for their opinions or for sometimes just stating the truth. Children of privilege, like Mamet's students, are spoiled and have never worked or learned to contribute to society. They have only learned to judge others. The Liberal Arts student does not have too much leisure—he has nothing but leisure. Such a young person is like a sponge and will easily become part of the herd of the politically correct. Mamet believes that the end of a liberal arts education is near since it has been proven that the graduates of these institutes of higher learning have nothing to offer society except their narrow judgments.



Chapters 25 through 28

Chapters 25 through 28 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 25: Oakton Manor and Camp Kawaga

Although Camp Kawaga in Chicago that Mamet attended was a summer camp for Jewish children, they were forced to take part in Christian events. They were made to go to "chapel" on Sunday, listen to Ave Maria and listen to the General MacArthur's poem written for his son that contained many Christian references. Another element of Mamet's childhood memories of summers in Chicago was Oakton Manor. It was similar to the Catskills and was a playground for adult Jews who were restricted from other hotels and resorts.

Chapter 26: Feminism

Feminism is another area of political correctness that Mamet has confronted in his work. He was criticized for being a misogynist by a female critic for his play, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. What the woman missed was that the play was about misogyny which did mean that Mamet supported it. Although liberals espouse to support feminism, they often display their hypocrisy. The left's dislike of Sarah Palin is in large part because she is a "worker," and does not fit their idea of a woman. She was a commercial fisherman who worked with her hands. The intellectuals could not cozy up to the image. Marilyn Monroe was a brilliant actress and comedienne but failed to meet the standards of the feminists of her day. The left was totally absent during President Clinton's exploitation of women. Liberals favor a liberal view of sexual relationships and marriage. The weakening of monogamy, however, will eventually destroy the family which is essential for a successful society.

Chapter 27: The Ashkenazis

Mamet is part of the last generation of Jews linked to the Ashkenazi Immigration. The Ashkenazi Jews were Eastern Europeans. Mamet's grandparents immigrated to the US in the 1920s and suffered with the rest of the country through the Great Depression. Although both sets of grandparents came to the US with nothing, their children all went on to attend college and have successful lives. Like many Ashkenazi women, Mamet's paternal grandmother was abandoned by her husband. Since it was tradition that the Jewish father was head of the family's religious instruction, the Jewish children abandoned by their fathers were not raised in a strict religious tradition. It is one of the main reasons that Reformed Jews abandoned many of the traditions and practices of Judaism—including the sidecurls (peis), dietary restrictions and the study of the Torah, among others.

In Mamet's younger days, all Jews were Liberals and Democrats and naturally he was raised to be the same. But as he matured, he began to question why. He recognized



that, as a lifelong Liberal, he endorsed "Social Justice." He began to see that it was often the government that made things unjust. If a contractor was forced to hire a minority why couldn't he fight that restriction so he could hire who he thought was the best choice? That contractor was not only forced to do something which may hurt his business, he was forced to pay taxes for something that would not be beneficial to his business.

Chapter 28: Some Personal History

The Jews were a stateless people and as such have had to learn to adapt quickly—learning new languages and assimilating to new cultures. They also gained an enormous amount of knowledge since it was something that could not be confiscated from them at the border. As a testament to their wisdom and intelligence, Jews are often appointed as trusted advisers and ministers. Obama's first appointment was Rahm Emanuel. Clinton appointed Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State.

As a people without a country, Jews were seen as victims by some and loathed by others. Now that the Jews have a state—Israel—they are seen as usurpers who stole land from the Palestinians. Of course, Israel was created by a British mandate that was ratified by the League of Nations.

Socialism promises a balance in society that once achieved can never be destroyed. Darwin implied that a country can undergo transition due to a physical change like in the climate. The 2008 presidential campaigns were vicious. Perhaps Darwin was right. The subject of "climate change" played a role—the Left wanting to save the world from it and the Right wanting to save the world from irrational fear about it.



Chapters 29 through 32

Chapters 29 through 32 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 29: The Family

The family is the single-most important unit for transmitting cultural information. As such, the information passed down through the generations is not based on reason necessarily, rather; it is based on family experience and customs. Established laws are often representations of unwritten rules which families and society live by. Liberal universities mislead students by teaching them that society is susceptible to reason and that traditions such as marriage and patriotism stand in the way of the individual's abilities and creativity and thus, they will not be able to help make the world perfect.

Chapter 30: Naturally Evolved Institutions

Just like the referee in a child's sports game, a judge must ensure that the rules have been obeyed. However, Liberals want to "fix" the game out of sentiment and compassion. They want to make the playground fair by giving an advantage to those with less ability or who are perceived to have been disadvantaged by society. Two children can work out the rules of their game and if there is disagreement, they can call in a parent to help them. In a socialistic society, it is the government that intervenes.

Marriage is a naturally evolved response to the primordial urge for monogamy. There are mechanisms to dissolve it if the partners so desire. But for the government to tinker with the foundation of the institution itself is to begin the dismantling of the social fabric.

Chapter 31: Breatharian

To survive, mankind depends on the innovations of men who devise ways to perpetuate life and make it better. Government did not invent the automobile nor can it oversee it effectively. The government can make work only by taking over jobs created by the private sector and doling them out less productively. Government intervention serves to retard the advancement of man. Unrestrained, humans are capable of fulfilling each other's needs and becoming prosperous and successful.

Chapter 32: The Street Sweeper and the Surgeon, or Marxism Examined

A Liberal youth may look upon a street sweeper and wonder why he's paid less than a doctor. It was Marx's vision that "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." (177) Government is becoming the arbiter of deciding what people need. Socialism stands on the side of the street sweeper and urges him to ask for more on payday since he gets far less than a physician. It is not the government's job to determine what is fair—it is a factor that is subjective and cannot be legislated.



The only way a street sweeper's wage can be increased is to tax the citizenry. But as history will confirm, the money taken from the physician in higher taxes will probably not reach the street sweeper's pocket—it will go off to support other Liberal dreams. If the street sweeper is not paid on the same scale as a physician, perhaps it will give him incentive to improve his lot. If he doesn't have the ability to become a physician, he should be encouraged to better himself and pursue a field in which he can succeed.

While it's absurd to judge that someone is not capable of a certain position because of his race, it is just as absurd to push someone into a position who is not suited for it just because of his race.



Chapters 33 through 36

Chapters 33 through 36 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 33: Self-Evident Truth

American Democracy is based on the belief that all men are created equal. The Dred Scott decision was one of the great violations of the tenet since it referred to two classes of human beings—black and white. The decision further declared that blacks were not entitled to the same protection under the law as whites. A racist view of the world can only result in injustice. Our nation has been the most successful in history because our laws are built upon the concept that compassion and greed in the hands of the state will result in misery. Demagoguery is when Government vows to lead the people to the Promised Land. It is trickery to convince the electorate to vote on "hope and change." What the voter needs to take note of is that often politicians are poor when they're first elected and rich when they leave office. They also need to remember that no one gets something for nothing. The Government destroys everything it touches. The people should save their abstract such as hope and their spiritual beliefs for their religion.

Chapter 34: Hope and Change

A democracy doesn't elect the best people in the country because they generally don't run. They elect attractive people. In high school football, the good looking kid is usually chosen as the quarterback. FDR knew how to endear himself to people with his smooth voice and words that served to disguise the out-of-control government he was heading.

Obama speaks of "hope and change." Hope is something that no one has control over. Catch words such as "new" and "improved" are successful in ad campaigns. Mark Rudd who headed a radical group that occupied Columbia University called for change. He insisted that he was speaking for the student body, but most students didn't support him. "Change" was also the strategy of the Communist party of the 1930s.

Chapter 35: The Small Refrigerator

Mamet's daughter had a friend who was an heiress. She had a small refrigerator in her room and each night would have a bedtime snack from the fridge. The heiress had no idea who filled the refrigerator each day. Just like Liberals, the little girl didn't comprehend that someone had to process the snack, buy the snack, carry it to her room and put it in her refrigerator. The Left is ignorant of the fact that we are all in this together. The biggest fault of Mamet's generation is ingratitude. That generation, rich and poor, has been living off the productivity of their parents and generations before them.

Chapter 36: Bumper Stickers



Old bumper stickers like "War Is Not the Answer," gave the false impression that there is only a choice between death and surrender. But when war is forced upon a country, the choice is between defense and death. War occurs in the absence or failure of diplomacy. If one's opponent sees war as the only answer, the other side is not afforded a choice. Although the Cold War was despised by the Left, it did maintain peace for decades. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro may have risen to power by criminal acts but as soon as they declared that they had established a government for the people, the Left embraced them. The Left craves power because they think it can "do good."



Chapters 37 through 39

Chapters 37 through 39 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 37: Late Revelations

Mamet did not serve in the military; he was given a deferment. Although at the time, he wouldn't have gone to Viet Nam if he had been drafted, he regrets that he didn't serve in the military. The Obama campaign slogans suggested that change happens without effort. Mamet has not worked hard at many things but focused on his gift for dramatization. Looking back on his days as a Liberal, he recalled thinking he was superior to others but couldn't describe why. Instead of asking what he would have done differently, Mamet leaves the past behind and changes the issue to what will he do next.

Saul Alinsky was the great community organizer and an idol of Barack Obama. The goal of the social organizer was to bring social justice to the community. Humans crave organization and order are essential elements of success. But order must be accompanied with freedom. The Left only promises the former.

Chapter 38: Who Does One Think He Is?

Mamet wrote *The Secret Knowledge*, a political book, not because he's an expert but because he is a citizen with something to say. The Constitution grants every citizen the right to speak his or her mind. The difference between fairness and equality is that the latter can be given a standard while fairness is subjective. The word "equality" is a matter before the law. Working on a movie set teaches those involved a lot. They learn when to be quiet, how to recognize the difference between good work and shoddy work and there is a sense of common purpose in wanting to do the best job possible. The set is also a training ground for new members of the industry who watch and learn from others so the processes are preserved for future generations. It's what the real America is all about—hard work and dedication.

Chapter 39: The Secret Knowledge

The 230 years of success of America is due to the adherence to the rational rules set out in the Bible and the values of the Judaeo-Christian society. The Left is determined to destroy the country and take away freedoms so that the population has more and more dependence on Big Government.



Characters

David Mamet

David Mamet is a renowned playwright, screenwriter and director. His most famous work, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, was both a successful play and movie. He is also the author of the plays, *American Buffalo* and *Waiting for Godot* among others. *Waiting for Godot* was a controversial work that was roundly criticized by a female critic who accused Mamet of misogyny. The play was about misogyny but Mamet himself was not a misogynist. It was an example to him of the hysteria of which Liberals are guilty when they think those who they perceive as powerful are abusing those who are weak, defenseless and victims.

David Mamet, a Jew, was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. It was a rather rough neighborhood he lived in but he felt he learned a lot about survival and fighting against the odds. Both sets of grandparents came from Eastern Europe to America in the early 1920s with basically nothing in their pockets. But they worked hard and instilled good ethics and values in their children who all attended college and had successful lives. Along the way, the family and the other Jewish families they knew were all subjected to various forms of discrimination but they didn't let that bias keep them from pursuing their dreams.

Like most Jews of the day, Mamet was raised as a Liberal and a Democrat. As he went out on his own, he began to question Liberal policies and began to conclude that Conservative policies were more in line with the Constitution and had the potential to lead the country to greater successes and the individual to higher achievements. It was then that Mamet became a dedicated Conservative and ultimately wrote *The Secret Knowledge* as a way to convey his political views.

Barack Obama

Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States. President Obama is the main target of author David Mamet in his book, *The Secret Knowledge*, a book that lauds Conservatism and denigrates Liberalism. Mamet derides Obama's presidential campaign theme of "hope and change." He compares that theme to savvy advertisement slogans such as "new" and "improved" that are catchy and lure people in but often don't have much substance.

Mamet offers strong criticism of Obama for bailing out the auto industry. He portrays Obama's decision to save the US automobile manufacturing industry as a step toward Socialism. This book was written before the auto industry rebounded and repaid the loan. It would be interesting to see what Mamet's reaction was to that result. He also depicts Obama as sending a daily message to the world that the United States is surrendering to its opponents. Mamet does not back this statement with any direct



quotations or speeches. It should be noted that the book was obviously written before President Obama gave the orders to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. While it is Mamet's right to feel how he chooses about our President, as a successful writer, he loses some credibility since he did not back up most of his remarks about Obama with facts.

Mamet makes the claim, again without any back-up, that the socialist Saul Alinsky was an idol of Barack Obama. Perhaps he based his conclusion on the fact that both men were community organizers although they did their work decades apart. Mamet indicts Obama for being a Socialist because he worked as a community organizer. It reminds one of a logic test. Alinsky is a Socialist and a Community Organizer. Obama is a Community Organizer so therefore he is a Socialist. It is quite a leap and escapes logic as just illustrated. It would be the same as saying John Wayne Gacy was a clown and a mass murderer so therefore all clowns are mass murderers.

President Obama does not come out well in this book. Mamet's scathing portrayal of him is at best a personal opinion because most of the criticisms he has of Obama are not supported by fact.

Saul Alinsky

Saul Alinsky was a community organizer and Socialist to whom Mamet refers as an idol of Barack Obama who was also a community organizer.

Al Sharpton

Al Sharpton is depicted as an opportunist out for personal gain who portrays himself to be an advocate for minorities.

Che Guevara

Che Guevara was a mass murderer and an idol of Liberals. Even though he was a criminal, once he declared he was for government by the people he was embraced by the American Left.

Rahm Emanuel

Rahm Emanuel, who is a Jew, is the first person whom the newly-elected President Barack Obama appointed to a position of trust.



John Hilton

John Hilton is the author of *Lost Horizon*. Mamet references the book's main character who was chosen to be taken to an isolated island because of his readiness to believe it was Paradise.

Jane Fonda

Jane Fonda visited the Viet Cong during the Viet Nam War. She posed with an enemy soldier and a large gun that was used to shoot down American aircraft.

Mark Rudd

Mark Rudd was an anarchist who led a radical group that occupied Columbia University. He called for "change" but had little support from fellow students.

Dambisa Moyo

Dambisa Moyo is an economist who believes that foreign aid to a developing country actually impedes that development by removing the incentive to advance on its own.



Objects/Places

U.S. Constitution

The U.S. Constitution is often referred to in *The Secret Knowledge*. Mamet feels that Conservatives are more in line with the Constitution than are Liberals.

Hope and Change

Mamet derides the Obama Presidential campaign for its use of "hope and change" as a reason to vote for someone.

The Left

The American Left is comprised of those who are members of the Democratic political party. They are also called Liberals and they support big government.

The Right

The American Right is comprised of those who are members of the Republican political party. They are also called Conservatives and they support a limited government.

Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot, is a play by David Mamet. He was criticized for being a misogynist because misogyny is the subject of the play.

Free Market

Conservatives believe in the Free Market where businesses can fail or thrive on their own without intervention from the government.

White Guilt

When Mamet was 60, his rabbi loaned him a book entitled, *White Guilt*, by Shelby Steele. The book influenced Mamet to turn away from Liberalism and toward Conservatism.

Lost Horizon

Mamet references *The Lost Horizon*, by John Hilton which portrays the main character as a liberal who is willing to believe in finding paradise.

Chicago

David Mamet was born and raised on the south side of Chicago in a rough neighborhood where he learned survival tactics.

Hollywood

David Mamet is a director and screenwriter and has learned a lot about success and work ethics on the movie set.



Themes

Liberalism

Author David Mamet is a Jew and was born into a family of Liberal Democrats. He maintained those politics most of his life until he began to question the policies and basic tenets of Liberalism. When he began this process, he realized that he actually detested Liberalism. To Mamet, if Liberalism was allowed to remain in power for any significant length of time it would spell the destruction of the United States.

Mamet sees Liberals as dreamers who believe that the government is responsible for helping the weak and downtrodden and for making life in America "fair." Liberals stand in the way of progress by intervening in issues into which they have no business stepping. For example, Liberals feel that big government is needed to support education and health care for the country. And in some cases, they feel government should step in to bail out failing businesses.

Liberals take the side of victims or those they perceive to be victims. They see the Palestinians as victims because they are backward, poor, unsophisticated and basically defenseless. Liberals view Israelis as ruthless and cruel for denying land to the Palestinians who once occupied Israel.

It is a fact that humans crave "order" to have success in life. Liberals provide that essential order in their governing; however, they strip away freedom which is also essential for achieving a successful life and career.

Conservatism

Although playwright David Mamet, born in a Liberal Jewish family, began life as a Democrat, as he matured he began to question the views and policies of the Liberals. In his later years, Mamet eventually became an avowed Conservative. To Mamet, Conservatives see the world as it is and have a basic understanding that both the nation and the individual have better chances for success if the government does not interfere into every part of the people's lives. Conservatives have a rational and reasonable view of the role of government.

To the Conservative, government has only a limited role and purpose in the life of its people. The government has three main purposes: Defense, Justice and the maintenance of the infrastructure, i.e., bridges and roads and the like. Government has no business being involved in education, health or nosing into the private sector like automobile manufacturing (a direct slam at President Obama).

Mamet proclaims that order is necessary for the individual and nation to survive. "Order" is supplied by the government but another element that is essential for success is freedom. It is strictly a Conservative notion that business and the populace will both



thrive in the free market. It is an unencumbered environment that allows for free enterprise and the creativity and advancement of the individual.

The Left vs. The State of Israel

In *The Secret Knowledge*, author David Mamet makes many references to the unfair way in which American Liberals view the State of Israel. Mamet describes how Left leaning America adores those who are "victims." Perfect victims for the Left are the Arabs because they are seen by Liberals as backward, unsophisticated, denigrated and not very smart. The Arabs represent the perfect formula of victims in the view of Liberals. American Liberals have great empathy for the "Arab cause," because it involves the downtrodden trying to emerge from the shadows.

The problem that Mamet has with the sympathy the Liberals have for the Arabs is that they automatically place the blame on the Jews and portray the Israelis as the victimizers. Although the Jews were a people without a state for eons and were given land formerly occupied by the Palestinians in a peace settlement arranged by the League of Nations, the Left looks at the Jews as usurpers who stole land right from under the Palestinians. And of course, the Palestinians are the perfect victims since they are backward, poor and basically defenseless.

Mamet resents the moral equivalency that the Liberals try to apply to the Israeli-Arab conflict. All the Israelis want to do is live freely and safely within their borders and defend themselves when necessary and all the Arabs want to do is wipe the Israelis off the face of the earth. How in any way do the intentions of the two factions compare in any equitable manner?



Style

Perspective

The *Secret Knowledge*, by David Mamet is written in the first person. Mamet is a life-long writer. He is a successful playwright and screenwriter. Therefore, his writing credentials are beyond dispute. Mamet writes this political book about the destructive nature of Liberalism from the point of view of a "reformed Liberal." The book is filled with only his own opinions and observations and he, of course, is the best person to accurately convey them.

Mamet provides a very partisan view of American politics, especially where Conservatism vs. Liberalism is concerned. Mamet does not provide much substance to convince the reader that the American Left is anti-American or wants to see the ruination of the United States. Mamet makes wild accusations about the Left but does not support them with facts and events.

On the other hand, to Mamet Conservatism is totally in line with the U.S. Constitution and is pristine and perfect. Conservatives have all the answers and are the only people who are qualified to run the government. From the first chapter to the book's conclusion, Mamet finds no fault with Conservatives and finds nothing good to say about Liberals. It is a one-sided account that becomes boring and predictable. He interjects his vitriol against the Liberals throughout the book by repeating many of the same, tired statements.

Tone

In *The Secret Knowledge*, author David Mamet strikes a reflective tone in that he takes experiences from his entire life as a way of explaining his transition from Liberal Democrat to Conservative Republican. As the author states, he wrote this political book as a way of conveying his personal opinions and observations about the political landscape in America.

Mamet has written a very partisan description of modern American politics. He does admit that he is a partisan but that admission does not take away from the fact that he makes some wild accusations about the opposition—especially about Barack Obama—that he does not support with facts. For example, he makes the rather bizarre statement that each day President Obama announces to the world that the US is surrendering. He doesn't bother to quote any speeches or statements made by the President that would give fodder to this claim. The book was written before Osama bin Laden's end which was ordered by Obama and could not be interpreted in any way to be "surrender." It is quite obvious that Mamet has no respect for President Obama and, indeed, detests him.

One theme that is recurring in the book is Mamet's resentment for what he thinks the Liberal view of Israel is. Mamet does not disguise his bitterness for Liberals who have



any sympathy for the "Arab cause" or who feel that the Palestinian's have a claim to any of the land in Israel.

Structure

The Secret Knowledge, by David Mamet is separated into thirty-nine small to medium sized chapters. Following the last chapter is an "Acknowledgments" section; a "Bibliography" section; and, an "Index."

The first chapter explains what led Mamet, a playwright and screenwriter, to become interested in the political landscape and how he transitioned from a Liberal Democrat to a Conservative Republican. He goes on to explain in subsequent chapters about the state of politics in America and how the Left, in his opinion, is the ruination of the country.

There is not a defined structure to the book and each of the chapters addresses a different issue although he revisits some of his main themes, especially Conservatism vs. Liberalism, in all the chapters. The book is not structured as a chronicle or historic narrative in that each chapter is a stand-alone entry and is not dependent on the preceding chapter.

The fact that Mamet has spent most of his career as a creative writer is obvious in that his writing is free-style; he does not arrange chapters in any specific order; and, he changes subjects quite often within any given chapter. The reader must stay very alert for these changes since they occur frequently. He uses a type of flashback technique by referencing his past experiences to crystallize concepts that he is describing about current topics.



Quotes

"A good drama aspires to be and a tragedy must be a depiction of a human interaction in which both antagonists are, arguably, in the right." (Chapter 1, page 2)

"In a potentially violent altercation, the party nearest his opponent's home will withdraw." (Chapter 3, page 11)

"Civilization is preceded by culture, which is worked out by innumerable interactions over ages." (Chapter 3, page 18)

"Freudianism. . . [is] a disease which presents itself as its own cure." (Chapter 6, page 34)

"This new post-governmental America, then, may, without guilt, apologize for the arrogance of its prosperity and the beauty of its traditions and culture, and plead with the weak of the world to be allowed to join them." (Chapter 7, page 49)

"Most legislation aimed at eliminating unhappiness and discontent has resulted in misery." (Chapter 13, page 71)

"Socialism is the end of all invention; it is the happy face of slavery. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest. ~ J. S. Mil." (Chapter 13, page 73)

"He did not, like a Puritan, torment himself and others with scruples about everything that was pleasant." (Chapter 17, page 88)

"The spiritualist and the politician are essentially magicians, one offering diversion, the other security, in exchange for a suspension of common sense." (Chapter 20, page 101)

"One might say that the politician, the doctor, and the dramatist make their living from human misery; the doctor in attempting to alleviate it, the politician to capitalize on it, and the dramatist, to describe it." (Chapter 26, page 134)

"We shall best understand the probable course of natural selection by taking the case of a country undergoing some physical change, for instance, of climate." (Chapter 28, page 160)

"Lincoln wrote that if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." (Chapter 33, page 191)



Topics for Discussion

What are Mamet's views of President Barack Obama? How does he characterize the president?

What are Mamet's views on socialism? Marxism? Capitalism?

What issues does Mamet have with Liberals? Why does he feel they will destroy the United States if they gain power?

What political party was Mamet affiliated with most of his life? Why did he change his views in later life?

What are Mamet's views on race? How does he characterize the Left's views on Israel? Why does the Left's support of the "Arab cause" disturb him?

What are Mamet's views on a Liberal Arts education? Why does he think Liberal Arts education will eventually disappear?

What does David Mamet do for a living? What inspired him to write *The Secret Knowledge*?