The Song of Igor's Campaign Study Guide

The Song of Igor's Campaign by Anonymous

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

The Song of Igor's Campaign is one of the classics of medieval epic literature and the only surviving example of the epic form written in Russia. It was written between 1185 and 1187, shortly after the events it describes took place. The epic relates the unsuccessful expedition of Prince Igor of Novgorod-Seversk, in Russia, against the nomadic tribes known as the Kumans, who had been raiding Russian lands in the southeast. Igor is defeated and captured but he eventually escapes and returns to Russia.

The manuscript of *The Song of Igor's Campaign* was discovered in 1795 and first published in 1800. The one surviving manuscript was then destroyed in the fire of Moscow in 1812. Fortunately, a copy had been made for Russia's Catherine the Great. However, there are many corrupt passages where the anonymous author's meaning is unclear.

The Song of Igor's Campaign has always been treasured for its literary quality. It is dense with imagery, simile and metaphor, and shows great structural variety. To the tale of Igor's military campaign, the author adds reminiscences of Russia's past. He employs laments, panegyrics (passages which lavishly praise a person), omens and dreams. *The Song of Igor's Campaign* is also notable for its poetic view of nature, in which animals, vegetation and natural forces react to and even shape the actions of humans. The author's psychological insight into his characters has also been admired.

The major theme of the work is the author's passionate plea for unity amongst the Russian princes, who had a history of feuding among them. The author believes that disunity leads to disaster for Russia. A melancholy feeling therefore pervades the epic. Although the author makes Igor's defeat seems more important than it was historically, his words proved prophetic. Early in the next century Genghis Khan's Mongol army conquered Russia and subjugated it for 200 years.

Author Biography

The author of *The Song of Igor's Campaign* is unknown. Scholars believe the epic was the work of one man, not the accumulated effort of many, but anything else said about the author is speculation. From the text it appears that the author was very familiar with military life, and it is possible that he took part in Igor's campaign. The anonymous author also knew about hunting, and had detailed knowledge of the flora and fauna of the prairies. He was learned in books and oral tradition and was well acquainted with the genealogies and histories of the Russian noble families. It is possible, then, that he may have been a court poet, or a close companion of a prince.

When *The Song of Igor's Campaign* was discovered in 1795, some suspected it might be a forgery. However, few question its authenticity today. Scholars point out that the Old Russian language in which the *Song* is written is used with great skill, and no one in the eighteenth century had the knowledge or the poetic genius to forge a work of such high quality. This is the same verdict that Alexander Pushkin, the foremost Russian poet, reached at the time the manuscript was discovered. He said there was not enough poetic ability in the entire eighteenth century to forge even a small part of *The Song of Igor's Campaign*.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-70: Invocation

The epic begins with a tribute to Boyan, an eleventh century Russian bard who paid tribute in song to the military exploits of Russian princes. Nothing is known of Boyan other than the allusions to him in the *Song*. The author praises Boyan's poetic inspiration and names three princes who were subjects of Boyan's songs: the great ruler Yaroslav, prince of Kiev from 1019 to 1054; Mstilav, who was known as Mstilav the Brave, and Roman, who was killed by the Kumans in 1079. The author then says he will tell of events that happened in his own time, not in the past, and he introduces his subject: he will describe how Igor led the Russian forces against the Kumans in defense of Russian land. Then follows another brief apostrophe (direct address) to Boyan, in which he imagines how Boyan might sing of Igor's military campaign.

Lines 71-150: Preparations for Battle

Igor's brother Vsevolod joins Igor. Vsevolod speaks in affectionate words of his brother, and tells Igor to saddle his horses, for his own are ready. Vsevolod then praises his own soldiers as having been bred for battle from an early age. They are masters in the pursuit of honor for themselves and glory for their prince. Next, Igor addresses his army. He tries to inspire them with heroic words about how it is nobler to die in battle than to be taken captive. Filled with ambition, he says he wants to drink from the water of the River Don, which is at the Kuman frontier. But as Prince Igor mounts his horse and rides into the prairie, there are various ominous signs in nature. These include howling wolves and the song of a bird (daeva) traditionally associated with misfortune. But the Prince is so eager for battle he does not notice them.

Line 151-180: Early Russian Success

The action now moves immediately to the battlefield. On the first day of battle, the Russians are victorious. In the early morning, they slaughter their enemies, and take away booty such as beautiful cloths and garments. They also capture young Kuman women and bring them back as part of the spoils of war.

Lines 181-230: Russian Adversity

The second day of battle day begins with ominous signs from nature. When battle commences, the fortunes of the previous day are reversed. The Russian army is surrounded on all sides by the enemy; they retreat. As the earth groans under the weight of the conflict, the Russians fight bravely and inflict heavy casualties on the opposing side. Igor is not mentioned directly, but his brother Vsevolod is twice singled out for praise of his courage and prowess.

Lines 231-266: Rebuke of Igor's Grandfather

As the battle rages, and the signs are bad for the Russians, the author takes a digression. He goes back to the events of former times, and criticizes the princes of that era for their feuding. He singles out two individuals in particular. First he names Oleg, Igor's grandfather, whom he blames for the internal wars that destroyed the unity of Russia. Historically, this was Oleg Svyatoslavich of Chernigov. Next he reminds his readers of the downfall of Prince Boris, who died in battle but whose name was tarnished because he too warred against other Russian princes. He also failed to listen to the advice of Prince Oleg, who advised him to surrender. This period, the author says, was disastrous for Russia. Death was everywhere, and the peaceful farming of the land was interrupted.

Lines 267-298: Russian Defeat

Returning to the battle, the author says it was the greatest battle of all time. The Russians fight on in the lands of their enemy, but by noon of the third day they are defeated. The two brothers are parted, but their fate is not yet disclosed. The defeat takes place on the shores of the River Kayala, which was a tributary of the Donets river, which was itself a tributary of the River Don.

Lines 299-350: Lamentations

In a long section, the author laments that in the wake of Igor's defeat, unhappy times have now come to Russia. The remaining princes quarrel among themselves, and Russia is subject to invasion on all sides. Grief and sorrow spread across the land as the victorious invaders demand tribute (money) from each household.

Lines 351-390: Igor Rebuked

The narrator then criticizes Igor and his brother for permitting, by their defeat, the evil forces to gather strength. He points out that Prince Svyatoslav, the Prince of Kiev and one of the most powerful of the Russian rulers, had always triumphed over the Kuman enemy. Svyatoslav is the cousin of Igor and Vsevolod. Svyatoslav had even captured the Kuman leader and taken him to Kiev as a prisoner. Historically, this occurred in 1184, a year before Igor's campaign. The narrator says that the peoples of Europe□Germans, Venetians, Moravians and Greeks□praise Svyatoslav. This praise is because the victory over the Kumans kept open the trade routes between Russia and southwestern Europe. But now all that has changed. Many reproach Igor for allowing the Kumans to capture so much Russian wealth. It is at this point that the narrator reveals for the first time that Igor was not killed in the battle, but was taken prisoner.

Lines 391-410: Prince Svyatoslav's Dream

The narrator relates the dream of Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev. It is full of ominous signs. He dreams he is covered by a black shroud, drinking wine that makes him sorrowful. Strangers from a foreign land pour pearls onto his chest (pearls were a traditional symbol of tears). And all night he hears the ravens calling.

Lines 411-450: The Prince's Dream Explained

The Prince's *boyars* (nobles) explain the dream to him. They tell him the story of Igor's ill-fated expedition, of how the forces of darkness overcame the forces of light. The victorious enemy is likened to a brood of panthers marauding across Russian lands, celebrating their revenge. Glory has faded from Russia and only shame is left.

Lines 451-490: Svyatoslav Speaks

Svyatoslav replies in words that give more insight into why the narrator rebuked Igor in the previous section. The Prince says that Igor and Vsevolod acted too rashly. Although they showed courage, they were too ambitious, and that was why they failed.

Lines 491-590: The Bard Appeals to Russian Princes

The narrator now appeals, one by one, to the surviving Russian princes. He asks them to unite in defense of Russia. First he addresses Volodimir, who has been wounded trying to repel the Kumans as they attack the city of Rim, on the river Sula. Then he appeals to the powerful Vsevolod, Prince of Suzdal, for assistance. Next he turns to Rurik and David, noting their military prowess and appealing for their help in avenging the Russian defeat. He makes a similar appeal to Yaroslav of Galich (Igor's father-in-law), whose troops have proved their mettle. Then Roman and Mstislav are evoked as mighty warriors who have subdued Hins, Lithuanians, Yatvangians, and Kumans. Ingvar and Vsevolod, and three unnamed sons of Mstislav, are next. The author calls on them to protect the prairies and avenge the Russian land.

Lines 591-610: Tribute to Izyaslav

The narrator recalls the bravery of the warrior Izyaslav, who was killed in battle in 1162 against the Lithuanians. Izyaslav fought alone, without his two brothers, Bryachislav and Vsevolod, and this is honored by the author as a sign of Izyaslav's courage.

Lines 611-630: Reproach of Yaroslav and Vseslav

Yaroslav, the subject of an appeal by the author in lines 523-41 is now rebuked. (There is some doubt amongst scholars about whether this may in fact be a different Yaroslav).

Along with the descendents of Vseslav, he is held responsible for the invasions of Russia by the Kumans. The invasions happened because of the feuding between the Russian princes.

Lines 631-686: The story of Vseslav

Vseslav of Polotsk (d. 1101) conquered Novgo-rod in 1067, but was then defeated at the river Nemiga by Yaroslav's three sons. (Novgorod had traditionally been ruled by the House of Yaroslav.) In 1068 Vseslav became Prince of Kiev for seven months. He had a reputation for being a magician. These facts explain many of the references and expressions in this section. Vseslav is said to cast lots for a maiden; the maiden is the city of Kiev. He touches the golden throne with his staff□an allusion to the brevity of his reign. At night he has the ability to envelop himself in a blue mist as he travels, or to take on the form of a wolf-signs of his power as a magician. Lines 645-48 allude to Vseslav's victory at Novgorod, and the following lines (649-58) to his defeat at Nemiga.

Lines 659-686: Assessment of Vseslav

The narrator elaborates on the nature of Vseslav and his magical powers. He ruled his territories by day but at night he prowled like a wolf. He managed to travel all the way from Kiev to Tmutorakan in one night□an incredible journey since Tmutorakan is more than 700 miles southeast from Kiev! Then when the bells of the Church of St. Sophia in Polotsk tolled matins (morning services) for him, he could hear them in Kiev, 350 miles south. Despite the fact that Vseslav was physically strong, and a magician, he still suffered personal catastrophes. The author quotes the bard Boyan as having said of Vseslav that no one can escape the judgment of God. This section concludes with another short passage mourning the fate of Russia. It looks back to the glory days of Vladimir I and then in regret to the present, in which Russian forces are divided against themselves.

Lines 686-730: Lament of Yaroslovana, Igor's Wife

Igor's wife, Yaroslovana, stands on the walls of the city of Putivl and laments for her lost husband. She says she will fly like a cuckoo to the river Kayala and wipe the wounds from Igor's body. The remainder of her lament is divided into three parts, each of which apostrophizes (addresses directly) an inanimate force. First, she asks the wind why it chose to blow the weapons of the enemy in the direction of the Russian army. Why could it not just blow on the seas, setting the ships in motion? Then she addresses the river Dnieper. She says that since the river had the power to pierce the stone hills that run through the land of the Kumans, it can also respond to her request and return her husband to her. The last part of her lament is addressed to the sun. She asks the sun why it sent its hot rays onto her husband's warriors, scorching them on the battle-field when there was no water available.

Lines 731-770: Igor Escapes

One night Igor escapes from his Kuman captors. At midnight, on the other side of the river, a friendly Kuman named Ovlur provides him with a horse at midnight. Igor swims across the river, leaps on the horse, and speeds away. Ovlur accompanies him. The account of the escape is brief, but it follows the description given in the chronicles of the period. According to the chronicles, Igor's guards were enjoying a boisterous night drinking fermented mare's milk, and this gave Igor his chance to slip away.

Lines 771-802: Igor Speaks to the River Donets

The River Donets tells Igor that he will receive glory, and Russia will receive joy. In return, Igor praises the river. He says it carried him on its waves and he has enjoyed the green grass on its banks and the mists that enveloped him in the shadows of its trees. He compares it favorably to the river Stugna, which is a tributary of the Dnieper, south of Kiev. It was in that river that Prince Rostilav (paternal ancestor of Igor's wife) was drowned in 1093, after a battle with the Kumans.

Lines 803-830 : Igor Pursued by the Enemy

Two Kumans, Gzak and Konchak, pursue Igor on horseback, but soon realize they cannot capture him. Gzak suggests that they kill Igor's son, Vladimir, whom they still hold captive. Kochak replies with a suggestion that they enmesh Vladimir in the charms of a beautiful woman (presumably so that he will not be able to escape). Gzak replies that if they do that, they will end up with neither the woman nor Vladimir. Then he adds that the birds will start to beat them on their own territory. (The conversation between the two Kumans is difficult to interpret, and no commentator has satisfactorily explained these puzzling lines.)

Lines 831-861: Igor Returns to Russia

The author quotes a passage from a song by the bard Boyan, in which Boyan says it is hard for a body to be without a head□that is, for a land to manage without its king or leader. After pointing out how badly Russia misses Igor, the author describes the effect of Igor's return to Kiev. The sun shines and maidens sing, cities and whole countries rejoice. Igor goes immediately to the church called the Blessed Virgin of the Tower. The *Song* ends with a song of praise in honor of Igor, his brother Vsevolod and his son Vladimir, and to all the Christian knights of Russia who are fighting the pagans.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

"The Song of Igor's Campaign" begins with an introduction, calling to the audience to come, sit and listen to the tale of the latest Russian feud. This won't be a contrived story from someone of the noble class ("Boyan" or "boyer"), but a true story or how the brave and regal Igor led his troops against the Kumans for the sake of the Russian people.

The storyteller then addresses the boyer. The boyer enjoys exaggerating the ancient stories so that they praise the troops and princes more highly than anyone else does. The storyteller attempts to phrase the events as the boyer would: "Our princes didn't lose the battle and flee" or "The cities trumpet the victory of our sovereigns and raise banners in their honor."

The story finally begins. Igor is waiting for his brother Vsievolod. Vsievolod, who has a nickname of "Wild Bull," comes and praises his brother, telling him that he is his only brother and very bright. He urges Igor to saddle up, and then describes his own men as true warriors who live for battle and are always prepared and knowledgeable of their surroundings.

Then a solar eclipse occurs, a foreshadowing of events to come. However, Igor calls encouragement to his men, saying that it is better to be killed in battle than to become a prisoner of war. They should fight hard and not surrender. He calls to them to mount up and head toward the River Don. His greatest desire is to break a lance on (or fight) the Kumans and drink the water of the River Don or die in the attempt.

They mount up and set out onto the plains ("champaign") of Russia at night. The night seems to moan to Igor. Awakened by their passing, the birds and beasts join in the noise. They pass through lands they have never visited before: the seaboard, Sula, Surozh and Korsun. In the meantime, the Kumans are traveling up to the River Don; wagons creak and spread out like a flock of swans.

Igor and his warriors continue on, but the animals know that they will not be victorious in the upcoming battle. The red shields are just another portent of the misfortunes to come. The night seems to last forever. When dawn finally comes, a mist is covering the field. The whole world seems to be holding its breath, afraid to make a noise as the two armies line up for war in the name of honor and the glory of the homeland.

On Friday morning, Igor's men defeat the Kuman warriors in their first battle. They fan out on the field, overtaking them with numbers. They carry away Kuman women, beautifully woven fabrics, gold and jewels. The marshes are covered with equipment and the leftover clothing of the Kuman warriors. A red, white and silver banner is erected in Igor's honor to celebrate the day's victory. Each side sleeps through the night, but on

the next day, the storm clouds have come in from the sea, and rain pelts the warriors like arrows.

The Kumans attack Igor's men in a great battle. Weapons seem to simply break against the Kuman helmets, and Igor's men can make no headway against them. As the weather worsens, it suddenly seems as though more Kumans have joined the battle, coming at Igor's troops from all sides. The Russians are forced to retreat, but there seems to be no escape for them. Vsevolod stays and fights valiantly, leaving headless corpses all around him. He pays no mind to wounds he receives, caring only for defeating the enemy.

The storyteller leaves the audience hanging to tell them of the battles of Oleg, another great warrior who made the people of Russian fear him through battle. However, none of those battles could compare to the one that Igor's mean fought against the Kuman tribes.

They fought from morning to evening for two more days, but the fields were covered with trampled men, blood and gore. Igor worried about the fate of his brother. The Russian banners finally fell on the third day of battle, signaling that Igor had lost the battle.

The brothers are defeated, and they and their men begin arguing amongst themselves in the middle of their sorrow. Nature laments with them. The Russians argue over what belongs to whom, too busy to fight the Kumans any more. The news of Igor's defeat spreads throughout the land, and the Russian people lament such an enormous loss. The Kumans collect a kind of tax, asking for one vair (probably a fur) from each homestead.

The storyteller then pauses to remember the great victories of their father, Svyatoslav, and the respect and fear he gained in Russia because of them. He had even defeated the Kuman, but now, all of the bordering countries will make fun of Igor, even though they still hold respect for his father. They will say that it was a useless battle that only used up Russian resources without gaining anything for Russia.

Svyatoslav has a dream after Igor's defeat. He dreams that he himself has been dressed in black and laid on a funeral pyre, ready for death. They give him blue wine mixed with a deadly poison and lay pearls from the pagan enemies on him, as if for burial. However, his burial chamber lacks the final additions. He could hear the ravens all night, and a logging sleigh was taken to the sea.

The boyars come to explain the dream to their sovereign. They tell him that his sons (the "falcons") have been defeated by their enemies and captured. The day of the defeat was dark and rainy, and the Kumans have spread across the land. The survivors have been made slaves and have been disgraced. The women mourn on the banks of the river and call for revenge. The boyars only wish to hear anything that might cheer them up.

Svyatoslav weeps, saying that the battle had no real honor. They thought only of themselves and their riches, and that is the reason they lost. They could have asked for help from his brother, whose warriors can cause their enemies to fear them with only their battle cries and boot daggers, but they wanted all of the glory for themselves. His sons have now become useless to him.

The storyteller pauses again to discuss how the current knights and leaders have been affected by Igor and Vsevolod's actions. Russia is in turmoil, with everyone fighting against everyone else. The economy is poor, and no one is interested in uniting to pull the country out of the mud, but the storyteller calls for peace, even though no one is likely to listen.

He begins returning to the story by telling the fate of Vseslav, Igor's grandfather. Vseslav apparently won a woman while gambling, but ran to Kiev to begin a fight with the leader of Kiev, and then escaped by sneaking away using the mist as a cover. He then defeated the people of Novgorod and Nemiga, as well as other areas. He was a stealthy fighter, coming and going at night, taunting Kiev several times. He had wins and losses throughout his career, but he could not escape God's eventual judgment.

Yaroslav's daughter, Igor's wife, appears in the story. She weeps for her husband and wants to fly to him to heal him. She rages at the storm, blaming it for her husband's defeat, asking it to return her husband to her.

Igor is taken on a boat, still in the middle of the storm. Igor rests, watches and waits for the right time to make his escape. In the Kuman camp one night, he sees a horse, and manages to sneak through the camp and steal the horse. He rides away across the Kuman lands. When he reaches the marsh, where it would be difficult for the horse, he dismounts and runs, continuing toward home, hunting birds for his food.

Finally, he reaches the meadowlands of the Donets, a smaller river in western Russia. He recognizes that he is getting close to home and rejoices. The people of the area greet him and praise him for surviving the journey this far. The tapping of the woodpeckers guides him home, and the nightingale sings once again. Gzak and Konchak speak to each other of killing Igor on his way home, since his father believes him dead anyway, but they leave him alone.

Igor finally arrives at his home. The storyteller quotes a Russian proverb that says that as difficult it is for a leader to be without his country, it is bad for a country to be without its leader. Russia celebrates the return of Igor. The storyteller closes by blessing Igor and all princes and knights who came after him to fight the pagan enemies and protect Russia.

Analysis

The author, most likely a village storyteller, speaks passionately and sometimes directly to the characters of his own story in this passionate medieval epic. Much like any other epic, "The Song of Igor's Campaign" is based on real events in Russia—the

unsuccessful raid Prince Igor of Novgorod-Serversk on the Kumans, a nomadic tribe who had been raiding lands in southeast Russia.

The epic is full of metaphors, similes, anthropomorphisms, themes and social commentaries. Many of these may be lost to us, due to the change in culture since the 12th century, but because the manuscripts we have today are based on a copy that survived a great fire in St. Petersburg, some passages are especially difficult to understand. However, the overarching theme in the epic is one of steadfast loyalty to the homeland. This is seen in the numerous comments on the knights entering battle for their prince and for Russia and on the boyars explaining their sovereign Svyatoslav's dream. It is even seen in the storyteller praising the knights and the princes on their prowess in battle and in the conclusion, where he blesses the princes and knights of past and current times.

Several animals are used to describe scenes. The storyteller mentions birds quite often, but places special emphasis on swans, nightingales and falcons. Other animals mentioned are wolves and foxes, as well as other native Russian wildlife.

Wolves, like falcons and hawks, are predators and often seen as bloodthirsty killers, representing death or fear. In a more ancient age, however, wolves were respected for their intelligence, strength, courage and tenacity. The storyteller mainly uses the wolf in this epic to symbolize the long march across the Russian plains. The warriors are swift, often running, eager to reach their destination. However, Vseslav, Igor's grandfather, is also compared to a wolf, seen sneaking away from battle over a river, defeated.

Swans are not only historically a symbol of chivalry, but are also associated with a knight's oath to God, the Virgin Mary or a ladylove. Falcons are an obvious symbol here of hunting, aggression, eagerness, and often nobility. The first we see of the combination of falcons and swans is the tongue-in-cheek jesting early on, where the storyteller suggests that a boyar set ten falcons upon a flock of swans, but then tells the audience that it didn't really happen. This complicated imagery furthers the theme of loyalty, as the first swan to be killed sings the praises of the royal Russian ancestors, but this scene may construe that past Russian nobility threatened to test the loyalty of the general peasantry.

Swans are also known as far-ranging birds. The description of the Kuman warriors traveling with their creaking wagons toward the River Don as "dispersed swans" brings to mind an image of a vast nomadic tribe, not bothering to travel quietly, spread wide rather than walking in single file.

Nightingales have been a symbol of love, righteousness and poetry. In this epic, they are often seen preceding major points in the story. The first boyer (or "Boyan") mentioned is compared to a nightingale, ready to tell a story from his tree. The next instance is just before Igor's men and the Kumans engage in battle, where everyone seems to be holding their breath, waiting for the outcome. Finally, the nightingale is safe to herald a new day once Igor has escaped from the Kumans and is well on his way home.

Characters

Boris

Boris was a Russian prince who died in 1078. He was the grandson of Yaroslav I. He is used by the author as an example of princely folly (lines 245-50).

Boyan

Boyan was a minstrel and poet who sang in former days about the exploits of the Russian princes. He does not appear directly in the epic, but is invoked several times by the author, who praises his skill as a bard. Boyan is a "nightingale of the times of old."

David of Smolensk

David (d. 1198), brother of Rurik, fought the Kumans in 1183, alongside Rurik's forces. The author urges him and his brother to avenge the defeat of Igor.

Euphrosyne

Euphrosyne is Igor's wife. She is also called Yaroslavna. She appears late in the epic and sings a lament to the wind, the river and the sun in which she reveals her deep love for her husband. She also expresses compassion for Igor's fallen warriors.

Gzak

Gzak is a Kuman warrior who pursues Igor after he has escaped.

Igor, Prince of Novgorod-Seversk

Igor is the prince who leads the Russians in their attack on the Kumans. He is depicted as courageous and manly, imbued with a warlike spirit. He cares deeply for glory and for battle, and has the ability to inspire his men. "It is better indeed to be slain / than to be enslaved," he tells them (96-7). He is prepared either to triumph in battle or die in the process. Igor is also devoted to his brother Vsevolod and very concerned for his welfare in the battle. But on the negative side, he is so eager to pursue his military goals that he fails to see warning signs in nature. Later in the poem he is condemned for being too ambitious. Nonetheless, he is held in high esteem by Russians, because when he escapes from captivity and returns to Russia, the whole Russian land rejoices. Igor is also a family man, with a wife and son who accompany him into battle.

Ingvar of Galich

Ingvar is a prince (d. 1202) to whom the author appeals for assistance in avenging the Russian defeat.

Izyaslav

Izyaslav was killed in the Battle of Gorodets in 1162, against the Lithuanians. He is recalled as a brave warrior.

Konchak

A companion of Gzak, Konchak is a Kuman warrior who pursues Igor after Igor's escape.

Mstislav of Peresopnits

Mstislav (d. 1224), fighting alongside Roman of Galich, conquered many other nations, and is highly praised by the author.

Mstislav of Tmutorakan

Mstislav (d. 1036) was the brother of Yaroslav I. He is referred to in lines 26-28 as a great warrior.

Oleg, Prince of Chernigov and Tmutorokan

Oleg, also known as Oleg Malglory, was Igor's grandfather, who died in 1115. He does not appear directly in the epic, but the author recalls him and some of his deeds. Oleg is blamed for initiating feuds with other Russian princes.

Ovlur

Ovlur is Igor's servant, and he assists Igor in his escape from captivity.

Roman of Galich

Roman (d. 1205) was a powerful warrior. Linked with Mstislav of Peresopnits, he is praised by the author for subduing many other nations, including Hins, Lithuanians and Kumans.

Roman of Tmutorakan

Roman (d. 1079) was the brother of Igor's grandfather. He is referred to once in the epic, in lines 26-28.

Rostislav

Rostislav of Pereyaslval was a prince who was drowned in the River Stugna, a tributary of the River Dnieper, in 1093, during a retreat after a battle with the Kumans.

Rurik of Belgarod

Rurik (d. 1215) was a Russian prince hailed by the author for his military prowess. In 1183, he fought a battle with the Kumans. The author appeals to him for help in avenging Igor's defeat.

Svyatoslav III

Svyatoslav III (d. 1194) is Igor's first cousin. He is the Prince of Kiev and the most powerful of the Russian nobility. The author presents him as an ideal, wise ruler. He is feared by the Kumans and has won victories against them, capturing their leader. For these exploits he is widely praised by many peoples and nations. In words described as "golden," Svyatoslav rebukes Igor for behaving rashly and neglecting his duty and causing sorrow for his prince.

Vladimir of Putivl

Vladimir is Igor's son, who at the age of twelve accompanies his father into battle. He is mentioned only in passing, when two Kuman warriors consider whether to kill him because Igor, his father, has escaped. At the end of the epic, the author includes Vladimir in his final words of praise to the Christian knights who fight the pagans.

Volodimir, Prince of Pereyaslavl

Volodomir was wounded as he repelled a Kuman attack on Pereyaslavi. He died of his wounds in 1187.

Vseslav of Polotsk

Prince Vselav of Polotsk (d. 1101) was thought to be a magician. He travels surrounded by blue mist, and is described as a werewolf. He won a victory over Novgorod, lost a battle at the River Nemiga, and ruled for a short period in Kiev. The bard Boyan said of

him, "Neither the guileful not the skillful, / neither bird [not pard],/ can escape God's judgment" (676-78).

Vsevelod, Prince of Suzdal

Vsevelod later became Vsevelod III (d. 1212). One of the most powerful princes of the time, he is praised by the author for the mighty strength of his forces. (He is not to be confused with Igor's brother, Vsevelod.)

Vsevolod

Vsevolod is the brother of Ingvar. The author appeals to him and his brother to come to Russia's aid.

Vsevolod, Prince of Trubchevsk and Kursk

Vsevolod is Igor's brother. He is called Wild Bull or Fierce Bull and is a formidable warrior. It is Vsevolod who urges Igor to begin the military campaign. His troops are ready to ride off to the Kuman lands even before Igor's men are fully prepared, and he is deeply proud of the valor and martial skill of his men. His golden helmet gleaming, he fights valiantly, standing his ground even when the tide turns against the Russians. Immersing himself totally in the battle, he forgets everything else, even his home and his wife. Although he kills many of the enemy, he is eventually taken prisoner. He is hailed at the end of the epic as one of the warriors fighting the pagans.

Yaroslav I

Yaroslav I, known as the Wise, was Igor's great-great-grandfather. He is referred to in line 25 as one of the men praised by Boyan. He is also referred to as great. Yaroslav ruled Kiev from 1019 to 1054.

Yaroslav of Galich

Yaroslav (d. 1187) was the father of Igor's wife, Euphrosyne, and therefore Igor's father-in-law. He is praised as a great military leader who has expanded his lands and defeated the Hungarians.

Themes

Patriotism

The love of Russia's homeland and the desire to fight to preserve it is a continual theme in the *Song*. Early in the epic it is made clear that Igor leads his troops "in the name of the Russian land" (line 50). As Igor's army sets off on its mission, the author imagines glory ringing in Kiev, trumpets blaring in Novgorod-Seversk and banners raised in the city of Putivl. In other words, the whole of Russia is rejoicing in patriotic pride at this expedition.

Patriotism is again evoked in the phrase "the sons of Rus" (148) to describe Igor's army as they approach the battlefield. (Rus is the ancient name of Russia.) Their collective identity as Russians is presented as more important than their individual genealogies. In the midst of the battle Igor's men are "brave sons of Rus" (209), and when they fall, they die in defense of the Russian land (298). It is clear that for a warrior, no destiny could be higher than this.

Love of country is again suggested by the poignant refrain "O Russian land, / you are already behind the culmen!" (Culmen means hill.) This is first uttered as Igor and his men enter the Kuman lands. It suggests the affection the author and by extension the warrior feel for Russia, and how acutely they are aware of the fact that they have journeyed to a distant, foreign land.

The tone of melancholy that pervades the epic is linked to the fate of Russia. Sometimes this is in the form of nostalgia for a lost, glorious past. For example, the author laments that as a result of Igor's defeat, "The Russian land shall moan / recalling her first years / and first princes!" (679-81).

Although there are some laments for individuals, as when the Russian women mourn the fact that they will not see their husbands again (331-38), these are quickly followed by a more generalized lament for the Russian nation: The city of Kiev mourns, as does Chernigov and the entire land of Russia. It is this patriotic sorrow caused by the fall of Russia that dominates the author's mind, and it is patriotism that fuels his desire for the Russian defeat to be avenged.

Duty and Responsibility

The author does not present the defeat of Igor as the result of bad luck or the evil tricks of the enemy. As the epic unfolds it transpires that Igor only has himself to blame for the catastrophe. Although the author is sympathetic to Igor, and Igor's courage is never in question, he is rebuked for being too concerned with personal glory at the expense of his national duty. Historically, Igor and the three other princes embarked on their military adventure without the support of the other Russian rulers. This is why in the epic, Svyatoslav III, Igor's cousin, censures him. Svyatoslav had defeated the Kumans only

two year earlier, in 1183, and Igor's defeat undid all the Russian gains. Igor's honor is tarnished, therefore, because he acted too rashly. Caught up in martial fervor, he declared, according to words the author places in the mouth of Svyatoslav, "Let us be heroes on our own, / let us by ourselves grasp the ... glory" (480-81).

The moral is that the needs of the nation must be put before personal needs and ambitions. It is a matter of fulfilling one's duty. The author links this theme of Igor's lack of responsibility to occasions in the past when Russian princes have neglected their duty and quarreled amongst themselves. The effect has always been disastrous. These incidents form the substance of many of the laments in the epic. For example, Igor's grandfather Oleg "forged feuds with the sword" (235), and Prince Boris is rebuked for "vainglory" (pride and boastfulness) which he paid for with his life. And according to the author, the feuds associated with Yaroslav and all the descendents of Vseslav (d. 1101) are directly responsible for the invasion of Russia by the Kumans.

Given the author's interpretation of the political events of previous years, it is not surprising that he devotes nearly one-sixth of the entire epic (lines 491-630) to an appeal to the various Russian princes for a unified front to defeat the invaders and restore Russia's glory.

Nature and its Meaning

As in many medieval epics, nature plays an active role in the plot. The natural world is neither neutral nor inanimate. It reacts to human actions. When Igor sets off for battle, there are warning signs in nature: an eclipse of the sun and a storm at night. Nature already knows the outcome of the battle, and these signs might be interpreted as a warning to Igor. But he ignores them, and during the battle nature itself seems to turn against him. For example, the direction the wind blows in causes the enemy arrows to devastate the Russian army. After Igor's defeat, however, nature mourns. The grass droops and trees bend to the ground in sorrow. And when it is time for Igor to escape, nature assists him. The magpies and ravens keep silent, and this allows Igor to hear the sound of the woodpeckers, who with their tapping guide Igor to the river from which he can make his escape.

Style

Epic Features

The Song of Igor's Campaign contains many of the elements of the traditional epic. It is about a heroic figure, Igor, who is of national significance for Russia. The setting is vast, stretching across the great expanse of Russian lands, and the author augments this effect by recalling many battles from the past and naming the places where they were fought. The action involves feats of courage in battle, and the omniscient point of view adopted by the author allows him to tell of events widely apart in time and place. This also allows him to convey the inner feelings of some of the characters through dialogue and description. Finally, epics usually begin with an invocation to a muse, and this is echoed in the *Song*: the author starts by recalling the skill of the earlier bard, Boyan.

However, many aspects of the traditional epic are not present in the *Song of Igor's Campaign*. Supernatural beings take no part in the action. The *Song* relates events in the immediate not the distant past, and is therefore more directly historical than other medieval epics. It is also much shorter and more concise than the traditional epic, and it is written not in verse of elevated language, but in what scholars of the Russian language describe as a cadenced (rhythmic) prose. Nor is the *Song* entirely a narrative work. The story of Igor's campaign, his capture and escape, takes up less than half of the epic. The remainder consists of lyrical lamentations for Russia, omens, dreams, exhortations by the author to other Russian princes, and nostalgic flash-backs to events in Russia's past.

Metaphor

The author gives a hint at the beginning of the metaphoric style of his work. He writes that when Boyan wanted to recall some deed of old, "He set ten falcons upon a flock of swans, / and the one first overtaken, / sang a song first" (21-24). Seven lines later, the author explains his metaphor: Boyan did not literally do this, the ten falcons were his ten fingers and the flock of swans were the strings of his musical instrument.

Many more metaphors are used in the epic. One of the most striking is the metaphor of battle as farming. For example, Oleg "sowed the land with arrows" (236). The metaphor is repeated in lines 278-79, where the earth "was sown with bones / and irrigated with gore." The crop that these seeds produce is "grief" throughout Russia. The metaphor recurs in extended form when the author recalls the fate of Vseslav at the battle at the river Nemiga. Warriors' severed heads are "spread sheaves," the threshing implements are steel swords, and the threshing floor is where lives are laid out. Souls are "winnowed" from bodies and the banks of the river are sown with bones (651-58).

Simile

Similes are frequent. A simile is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two unalike things that resemble each other in one aspect. In this epic, the comparisons are usually made between humans and animals or birds. Boyan is compared to a nightingale and an eagle; warriors on both sides are likened to gray wolves; the Kumans as they advance are like "dispersed swans." When Igor's wife laments his fate, she is compared to a cuckoo, and when Igor escapes from captivity, he speeds to the reeds by the river "like an ermine," settles on the water "like a white duck," then runs "like a demon wolf" and flies "like a falcon" (751-59). The effect of these similes is to suggest the close connection between the human and the natural world, which is one of the themes of the epic.

Imagery

The author makes full use of color imagery. Red and gold are the most prominent colors. Igor's men carry vermilion shields (vermilion is a brilliant red color), and the Kuman standards, or flags, are also vermilion. The battle scene features "bloody effulgences" at dawn (a red sky) and "crimson pillars" (a metaphor for Igor and his brother as they go down to defeat, perhaps suggesting the setting sun).

Gold is used always with references to the nobility. Igor has golden stirrups and a golden saddle; his brother Vsevelod has a golden helmet. Princes have "golden thrones"; Svyatoslav's tower is "gold-crested" and his words are golden. In Russian art of the period, gold symbolized glory and magnificence.

The Kumans are associated with black ravens and black clouds. The color blue is used to describe not only the river Don but also the wine of sorrow that Svyatoslav drinks and the mist that surrounds the sorcerer Vseslav.

Hyperbole

Another technique used by the author is hyperbole, a figure of speech which employs exaggeration to heighten an effect. When Igor's brother Vsevolod describes his own warriors he emphasizes that they have been well trained for battle. A series of hyperbolic statements follow. His men were "swaddled under war horns, / nursed under helmets, / fed from the point of the lance" (79-81). The point is that his men have been bred for warfare since an early age. Then when the author appeals to Vsevolod, Prince of Suzdal, for assistance, he says Vsevolod's men are so powerful they can scoop the river Don dry using only their helmets (502-03). Similarly, Rurik and David were so effective in battle that their helmets floated on blood; Yaroslav has hurled heavy missiles over the clouds (529), and the iron breastplates of Roman and Mstislav make the earth rumble (553). In each case the exaggeration heightens the dramatic effect: great power is available for Russia if the princes would only use it.

Critical Overview

The Song of Igor's Campaign had an influence on Russian literature long before it was rediscovered in 1795. The manuscript known as the Zadonshchina, which commemorates the victory in 1380 of a Russian army over the Mongols, is based on the earlier epic in structure and poetic detail. The Zadonshchina was written about 1385.

In the modern era, *The Song of Igor's Campaign* has had an influence on Russian literature that is felt to the present day. It has been called a national classic, the greatest achievement of the Kievean period in Russian literature (1030-1240). The anonymous author has been called the equal of Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), Russia's greatest poet. Pushkin himself had plans to translate the epic into modern Russian, although he never fulfilled his desire. Poets of the Romantic era were inspired by the *Song*'s lyrical beauty and depth of feeling. In the nineteenth century, Nikolay Gogol used imagery taken directly from the *Song* in his short stories.

The reputation of the epic continued to grow in the twentieth century. Scholars spent much time on research, trying to produce the most accurate text possible. This was necessary because the one extant manuscript and the first printed version of 1800 contain many corrupt or obscure passages that have proved difficult to elucidate.

The Song of Igor's Campaign was first translated into English in 1902, by Leo Wiener, and again in 1915, by Leonard A. Magnus. Another translation appeared in 1943, by Bernard Guilbert Guerney, who wrote of the epic: "It is not only higher in poetic content but infinitely more readable than the *Nibelunglied* and the *Chanson de Roland* [*Song of Roland*]." Vladimir Nabokov made a fourth translation in 1960, and called the work "a magnifi-cent literary masterpiece." Nabokov's literal translation is considered to be the most accurate, although Nabokov sacrifices some of the poetic devices of the original, such as the frequent alliteration.

In the Soviet Union, Soviet poet Pavel Antokolsky, as quoted by Kuskov, wrote in *Pravda* in 1938, "[*The Song of Igor's Campaign*] is an eternally flowering trunk extending branches laden with fruit into the future. Therefore we hear direct and indirect echoes of this work in many monuments of our culture and art."

In 1941, Russia was invaded by the German Nazis. During those dark times of World War II, *The Song of Igor's Campaign* struck a deep chord with the Russian people. They were inspired by the epic's call for Russia to unite to defeat the enemy.

It is unlikely that *The Song of Igor's Campaign* will ever fall into disfavor or lose the reverence with which the Russian people regard it. Many educated Russians know parts of it by heart. In 1980, Russian literary scholar Vladimir Kuskov called it an "immortal work of Russian and world literature." It has frequently been translated into modern Russian in many different forms of prose and poetry, including free verse and more structured forms of meter and rhyme.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Aubrey discusses the epic in the light of mythologist Joseph Campbell's description of the "monomyth."

There has not been a great deal of detailed critical work in English on *The Song of Igor's Campaign*. It is often discussed fairly briefly in surveys of early Russian literature, and critics usually note the historical background, the poetic language and symbolism, and the political theme of Russian unity. Occasionally, a few parallels have been noted between *Song* and other medieval epics, such as the Western European *The Song of Roland* and the Germanic epic, the *Nibelunglied*.

However, *The Song of Igor's Campaign* differs from the typical medieval epic. *The Song of Roland* has its origins in events four centuries before the work was written; similarly, the historical events underlying the twelfth century *Nibelunglied* go back to the fifth and sixth centuries. Both of these epics contain miraculous or supernatural elements, such as the miraculous sword wielded by Siegfried to kill a dragon in the *Nibelungleid*, and the equally miraculous sword Durandal, as well as the magic horn, possessed by the knight Roland in the *Song of Roland*.

In contrast to these, *The Song of Igor's Campaign* remains much closer to historical events, having been written within a year or two of their occurrence. The author shows little interest in the kind of supernatural events that play an important role in other epics. There are few magical happenings in *The Song*, and those apply to a peripheral character from the past, Vseslav, who is used by the author as a bad example of princely conduct.

The Song of Igor's Campaign is also far less deeply imbued with Christian values and symbolism than the *Song of Roland*. In the latter work, Roland is helped by the direct intervention of the Archangel Gabriel; Charlemagne and his knights embody the Seven Cardinal Virtues of Christian moral theology, and the pagans embody the Seven Deadly Sins. In contrast, although *The Song of Igor's Campaign* was written two centuries after the conversion of Russia to Christianity, the Christianity it exhibits does not seem to be central to the author's way of interpreting the world. It is true that the Kumans are described as infidels and pagans, and the epic concludes with a passage praising the Christian knights, but the Christianity extends no deeper than that. The author's purpose is more political than religious, and the gods he prefers are the pagan gods of mythology, not the Christian God, who is mentioned only twice. And one of those references (in line 733) may be, according to translator Vladimir Nabokov, a corrupt passage, possibly altered by a Christian transcriber. The original word may have been *Stribog*, the god of the winds. Stribog is one of four pagan gods mentioned; the others are *Dazhbog*, the god of abundance, *Hors* or *Horus*, the god of the sun, and *Troyan*, whose function is not known but who is invoked four times.

Although there are differences between *The Song of Igor's Campaign* and other epics of the period, *Song* nonetheless contains certain elements that can be elucidated by an

approach known as archetypal criticism. This is a method of analyzing literary texts in terms of recurring symbolic or structural patterns (archetypes) that appear in the literature and mythology of many diverse cultures. One of the best known archetypal approaches was developed by mythologist Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero With The Thousand Faces*, which was first published in 1949 and became a bestseller in the 1980s. Campbell noticed that many mythological stories, although different in surface details, followed a similar underlying pattern. He called this pattern the "monomyth." In the monomyth, a hero journeys to an unknown or unfamiliar realm, undergoes many trials, which may include a symbolic death and rebirth, and then returns to his society to bestow a boon on his fellow man.

Archetypal criticism and the concept of the monomyth are useful for understanding parts of *The Song of Igor's Campaign*. They may also explain something of why this epic has held the respect and won the admiration of readers over a long period of time—it sets out in symbolic fashion the process of human renewal or psychic growth.

First, the hero Igor hears what Campbell calls the "call to adventure." He journeys beyond the territories he is familiar with, leaving Russia far behind, as is conveyed in the refrain, "O Russian land, / you are already beyond the culmen." Since a *culmen* is a hill, this phrase conveys the sense that Igor and his men have completely cut themselves off from their own world. Indeed, the battle takes place "in the field unknown, midst the Kuman land" (276).

Before this, the author has linked Igor symbolically with the sun. Vsevolod refers to his brother as "one bright brightness" (73) and only eighteen lines later, as the warriors assemble, Igor notices that the "bright sun" is eclipsed. This temporary "death" of the sun foreshadows the fate of Igor, who is like a sun to his men. The metaphor of Igor as sun is continued in the short battle scenes. He and Vsevolod are "two suns"; they are "crimson pillars" that are extinguished and veiled with darkness as they sink into the sea. These are images that suggest the setting of the sun on the horizon. Light is covered by darkness.

It is remarkable that Igor now disappears from the action of the epic completely, until his escape over three hundred lines later. The author does not disclose his fate. In terms of the monomyth, Igor is in the condition Campbell describes as "the belly of the whale," where he is completely enveloped in the unknown. This is a symbolic loss of self, a sleep, or even a death, that contains the seeds of the hero's rebirth. Seen in this light, the simple phrase "Igor sleeps,"—which appears when the author finally returns to Igor—suggests a significance beyond its immediate context. Igor may be asleep, but he is now ready to wake up: "Igor keeps vigil" is the very next line.

When the hero is ready to return to his society, the monomyth often features what Campbell calls the magic flight, in which the hero receives supernatural aid on his journey home. Sometimes the flight includes a sea journey at night.

Igor's escape resembles a magic flight. His relationship to natural and supernatural forces clearly undergoes a change at this point in the narrative. The winds whip up at

night, and God (perhaps it is the god of the wind) shows him how he can return to Russia. This is a contrast to the adverse way the wind blew during the battle, which helped to ensure Igor's defeat. Now, as Igor makes his break for freedom, he is more at one with nature than he had been before, and similes drawn from nature (ermine, duck, wolf, falcon) are used thick and fast to describe him. Swimming across rivers plays a role in his escape, and he also engages in a charming dialogue with the River Donets, in which each praises the other. This relaxed exchange on the banks of the river is quite different from Igor's calamitous experience at the swift-flowing River Kayala where he met his defeat. And nature has even more to offer Igor as he tries to escape his pursuers. Magpies and ravens fall silent, enabling the woodpeckers to guide Igor to the river with their tapping.

All this is suggestive of rebirth, an effect reinforced by Igor's destination when he finally reaches Russia. He does not return to his home in Novgorod-Seversk. Instead, he goes straight to Kiev, the capital city of Russia, where he is to present himself at the "paternal golden throne" (736). This is the throne of Prince Svyatoslav. In the epic, Svyatoslav is presented as the ideal ruler, who rebukes Igor for his rashness and his willingness to put the quest for personal glory above his duty to Russia and the other princes, especially Svyatoslav himself. The implication of Igor's journey to Kiev is that during his captivity—his time "in the belly of the whale"—Igor has learned from his mistake. Now he recognizes where his duty lies, and he seeks to make amends. And as Igor reenters Russia, the author appropriately returns to the sun image, which is also a metaphor for the prince himself: "The sun shines in the sky: / Prince Igor is on Russian soil" (841-42).

Igor's rebirth, then, consists of his growth beyond pride and personal ambition into a leader who accepts his place in the social hierarchy and who knows how to act in a way that brings the support of nature. In terms of the monomyth, this is the boon that Igor brings to his people. The author points out that the body cannot function without the head, and so a people cannot function without their leader (835-40). It follows from this that the influence of the head is felt throughout the body, just as the influence of the sun is felt throughout the body of the earth. Now that Igor, Russia's son/sun, has risen once more, his own growth can, or should be, Russia's too.

Not all the components of the monomyth are present in *The Song of Igor's Campaign*, but examining the epic within that framework shows that it possesses an inner, psychological dimension alongside the political one.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, for *Epics for Students*, Gale, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Tatiana Fefer claims that Slovo O Polku Igoreve *(*Song of Igor*) is not an epic, but a "sophisticated lyrical work."*

The *Slovo o polku Igoreve* is not only the most famous work of medieval Russian literature, but after nearly two hundred years of study it remains among the most mysterious. Much of its symbolism has never been satisfactorily interpreted. Many of its "dark" places continue to remain obscure and hopelessly out of reach, and as a result, the author's original idea remains open to considerable speculation. Although the *Slovo* is still generally identified as an epic, some scholars, such as D. S. Lichacev (Lichacev 1978) have in recent decades began to modify the traditional views, recognizing the significance of the work's lyrical undertone. Unfortunately, however, even this change of viewpoint has failed to bring about any satisfactory re-interpretation.

The aim of this paper is to continue where Lichacev left off and to demonstrate that the *Slovo* is not an epic, as it is generally believed, but a highly sophisticated lyrical work. This study offers a new and challenging interpretation of the text, made possible by paying greater attention to the work's poetic idea and composition and by taking a closer look at its author's mode of reasoning and philosophical outlook; it also brings into focus small and often overlooked details of the text which prove to be highly significant.

One basic error that most scholars commit when dealing with the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* is their nearly unavoidable adoption of a patronizing attitude toward its ancient author. Almost unanimously, they see him as a talented but somewhat confused man who cannot quite decide whether to call his work a tale or a song, and in what exact manner he should sing it. In the past two hundred years, many men of letters recognized the superior poetic talent of the author but saw an apparent lack of logic in the development of the plot, and as a result took up the task of helping him with the tale, often rearranging words and whole passages, and supplying the old author with their own literary ideas along the way. Numerous translations and interpretations, both in prose and in verse, produced the work we have today□obscure, nearly devoid of meaning, absurd in places, and as this study will attempt to show, with its original essence all but lost.

To gain insight into the poetic idea of the *Slovo*, it is important to take on a willingness to see its author as a sophisticated and complex poetic mind, capable of creating stylistic nuances of both irony and cynicism, whose seemingly illogical composition of the original text is deliberately and purposefully designed.

In my reading I used a Musin-Pu□kin text, as well as its Ekaterininskij copy recognized by many as the least damaged versions of the work. Both appear in Gudzij's edition. The English translation of the *Slovo* is adopted in part from Serge Zenkovsky. My comments are placed in square brackets.

The key to understanding this complex work lies mainly in its opening passage, in which the seemingly insignificant particle "bo"... translated in modern Russian as "ved'" ("it is known" or "it is believed") provides a stylistic nuance of irony which has escaped the attention of most scholars, but is of particular importance. ... With this detail in mind, the opening passage can be briefly interpreted as follows:

Wouldn't it be nice, brethren, to commence the grievous
tale of Igor's campaign according to the conventional
style? To begin following the accepted stories
of our time, and not according to the whim of Bojan?
For he [it is believed] is a sorcerer [and that means he
is not to be entirely trusted]; when he wants to
compose a song, [they say, he can do magical things:]
he can soar over a tree with his thoughts, run as a grey
wolf over the land, fly as an eagle below the clouds.
[And while doing these magical things,] he would
recall the feuds of former times. Then [they say] he
would let loose ten falcons upon a flock of swans [□].
[But, in fact, all this is not true. He was neither a
sorcerer nor did he do any of these magical things. In
reality,] brethren, Bojan would [simply] lay his wise
fingers upon the living strings and they would sound
on their own□

Oh Bojan, if you sang about this campaign while
soaring like a nightingale over the tree of *wisdom*, if
you used your *mind* to fly under the clouds [□], then
you would sing Igor's song like this: "[□] [i.e., in
a very loud, harmonious and heroic fashion. But Bojan
did not use his *rational mind* or *wisdom* to create a
conventional epic, instead, he followed his *feelings*
and free poetic *inspiration*.]

As a result, instead of the traditionally expected picture of glory, he sees a nightmare, a dark and disturbing dream, deep within his soul. His poetic creation is not the harmonious song of a nightingale but a cacophony of mysterious sounds. In his song, ... jackdaws caw in the dark, foxes bark, eagles screech, frightening battle cries of the devil's children are mixed with the groaning of the earth itself; and Div, a mysterious bird-like deity, cries its ominous warnings. Even when the poet hears trumpets, they sound not gloriously, but mournfully, after the lonely death of prince Izjaslav.

Thus, since the irony of [his utterance] was not taken into account, the author's artistic method was misunderstood both by his contemporaries and by modern scholars alike. Both compare him to a sorcerer, which he quite obviously was not, and both fail to recognize in *wisdom* and *thought* the opposition to *free feeling* of one's heart. It appears that *wisdom* and *rational thinking*, in Bojan's understanding, are connected with the generally accepted and easily recognizable artistic clichés, loud and heroic; while pure

artistic inspiration, on the other hand, is heard in the esoteric melody of the strings sounding on their own and following nobody's rules.

Therefore, in addition to the obvious plot, the author of the *Slovo* touches the purely poetic dilemma: can a poet let his inspiration roam freely (in a pagan fashion) or does he have to rationally choose what to think and what to feel? According to the introduction, the essence of the *Slovo* could be seen as a lament of an independent poetic mind trying to come to terms with rigid rules, both artistic and moral. The underlying theme of the work could be seen as a reflection of the inner struggle between the rational and the intuitive, between mind and body, between pagan values and Christian values. The latter would also explain the seemingly casual combination of pagan and Christian elements in the work, which proved to be difficult to interpret for many scholars. Thus, the explicit story of the historically-based battle of Igor' can be seen as a mere outer surface of this multi-layered inner conflict, concealed by symbolism.

Another important aspect of the *Slovo* is that many of its structural and stylistic elements suggest a dream□rather than a true-to-life recounting of the historical events□lying at the centre of the poem. The "unreality" of the setting is stressed by the ever-present atmosphere of darkness that envelops virtually the entire work, in which supposedly historical events unfold without any apparent chronological order. Indeed, the author himself points at this dream-like state as the source of his vision of the battle of Igor, the picture and sounds of which are evoked in the poet's imagination at the break of dawn...

...In the dark of night or in twilight, in a solitary state between dream and awakening, it seems that dark and uncensored feelings roam within the poet's psyche, following their own logic. When the rational mind is eclipsed by a dream-like state, these feelings sometimes transcend into the realm of the subconscious and find their expressions in pure symbols. Thus, it is interesting to point out that in the *Slovo*, the sun never fully appears in the course of Igor's campaign; the mysterious atmosphere of darkness, on the other hand, is repeatedly stressed by the author. In keeping with this transcendental state, the dark tale is not presented by the direct succession of events; the themes and scenes interchange chaotically; events from the past, future and present casually come together, while the poet perceives their course as natural, seemingly unaware of anything unusual or illogical in their manifestation. Such a psychological perception of events most often takes place in the realm of dreams, when a restless mind tries to sort out past occurrences or project itself into the future in search of answers to its own anxieties.

Closely interwound, both the obvious and the esoteric plot of the *Slovo* deal essentially with the same issues of moral and spiritual doubts. Apparently, one of the key dilemmas facing both the poet and his hero is the difficult task of choosing between two sets of moral values, Christian and pre-Christian, and abandoning one in favour of another. The irreconcilable contradictions within the poet's psyche and his inability to adequately deal with the problem, it seems, deeply affect his consciousness, and as a result, become projected into the plot. In the beginning of the *Slovo* the author sets out to tell the whole Christian history of Russia ...but in fact, he cannot find a single happy event to tell

about□only feuds, wars and hunger. The Christian God, it seems, did not bring the promised peace. Left alone with his feelings, the author cannot suppress his frustation and clear longing for the old days when they were all...children of the sun-god, strong and united; and he is looking for the answer to the question of why this life ended. Perhaps the old gods themselves are staging their revenge for being abandoned: "Ni chytru, ni gorazdu, ni pticju gorazdu suda bo□ia ne minuti." Possessing an uncommon mind, Bojan obviously has the ability to see sorrowful events coming long before they take place or before anyone else can see them, and the pagan feelings of bad premonitions and dark symbols make the outcome of the events evident to him before they actually happen... (ironically, the same pagan gods, summoned by Jaroslavna, later help the hero to escape).

It is quite obvious that within his heart the poet bitterly blames others for his troubled state. His feelings tell him explicitly that the princes and their feuds are responsible for the lost happiness of the bygone days... This idea of doom and longing for the past is further emphasized by Svjatoslav's lament, in which the hero weeps for his vanished youth that can never be returned. In Svjatoslav's dream, he blames the treachery of [those in his dreams], whoever they were, for his sorrow: they appeared as friends, but in reality they were enemies and should never have been trusted. Symbolically, they dress him in a black shroud, they pour for him blue wine mixed with sorrow, from their empty quivers they pour large pearls and comfort him. Although the exact literary identity of [those in his dreams] has never been clearly established by the researchers of the *Slovo* (most often they are referred to as *foreigners* or *translators*), their historical Greek connection is mentioned in one of Nestor's chronicles...

...Consequently, one cannot entirely discount the idea of a subtle connection between the acceptance of Christianity by Russia from the Greeks and the symbolism of Svjatoslav's dream, which shows the hero's initial mistake in judgement and later regret. This supposition would also logically correspond to the general idea of the *Slovo*. Significantly, in his call for help, Svjatoslav appeals to the princes with the voice of the old gods...

...Characteristically, the struggle of the princes among themselves...presents a certain parallel to the inner struggle within the poet's psyche□the irreconcilable contradictions between the consciously adopted Christian moral values and the concealed (yet quite apparent to the reader) inner pagan desires. Thinly veiled by symbolism, the erotic undertone of Igor's passion is easily recognizable. Perhaps it is also evoked by the old gods who make Igor' forget the Christian values which teach one to resist carnal temptations. The hero's inner fire is translated in the text into a symbolic obsessive need to drink water from a helmet or to break his lance at the end of the enemy's field...

...The words "pochot" and "iskusiti" traditionally have erotic connotations in the Russian language. Consequently, Igor's statement...which was found illogical by some scholars because it was pronounced by Igor' before he left for the war, appears clearer considering that Igor's inner battle was all but lost. He was, indeed, a prisoner of his own body. ...

...Regardless of the divine warnings, they cannot turn back. Unwittingly, perhaps, the poet is questioning the very virtues of conventional morality. His apparent cynical attitude finds its stylistic expression in the text in the lament of the Russian wives who casually equate husbands with money...

...Ironically, "mysliju smysliti" and "dumoju sdumati" (of the dear beloved) is a tautology referring to a rational, cerebral process, while the intuitive affectionate gesture of a gentle touch is reserved for gold and silver.

Free-roaming feelings uncensored by the rational mind apparently bring uneasiness and fear to the poet in the images of beasts, mysterious birds, nightmarish chases, bloody scenes, strange voices and sounds from unknown sources. The voice of Div or the devil's children resound in the twilight atmosphere of lonely contemplation. Typical of a distressed human being, the poet's uneasy thoughts wander chaotically from one subject to another and find their parallel in the doomed fate of Russia or in frustration concerning Igor and all his relatives, which, perhaps, reflects Bojan's personal feelings of guilt and a wish to blame somebody else for his own pagan weaknesses. ...

...Seeing the *Slovo* in this light also clarifies perhaps the darkest and most often misinterpreted part of the whole work□the sentence just prior to its glorious conclusion...

> ...Bojan expressed his wishes to be like the old-time bard of Svjatoslav [□] [because he realized that] it is difficult for the head to be without shoulders [i.e., to have only rational mind without a heart], but it is wretched to have a body without a head [i.e., to be ruled entirely by your emotions and physical desires without control of the conscious mind].

This appears to be the main idea of the entire work and it brings the *Slovo* to its surprising but logical finale: in the bright morning sunshine, Igor, although Christian asceticism was not in his nature, nevertheless goes to church, perhaps with the purpose of asking God to forgive him for his sins and give him renewed inner strength.

It can be concluded, therefore, that the *Slovo* may be much less muddled and incomprehensible than we are taught to believe; and the key to a new understanding lies not in rearranging words and the sequence of events, but simply in one's willingness to trust the logic and wisdom of the author, in whose tale a historical event of the ill-fated campaign of Igor' serves as a stylistic metaphor for the esoteric struggle within the poet's psyche.

Source: Tatiana Fefer, "The *Slovo O Polku Igoreve*: A Poetic Dream," in *Russian Literature,* Vol. 42, 1997, pp. 17-24.

Critical Essay #3

The author of this essay, Robert Mann, explores the meaning of the beginning stanzas of the Igor Tale.

No satisfactory solution has yet been proposed for the problems presented by the following passage near the beginning of the *Slovo o polku Igoreve*:

Let us, brothers, begin
this tale
from old Vladimir
to the present-day Igor,
who pulled out his mind with his fortitude
and sharpened it with the valor of his heart,
filled with the battle spirit,
led his valiant regiments
against the Polovtsian land
for the Russian land.

Why does the narrator propose to begin "from Vladimir" when Vladimir plays no role at the beginning of the tale? And what is meant by "beginning from Vladimir to Igor"?

Likhachev's argument that this line defines the chronological limits of the events dealt with in the tale is weak in at least two respects. First, Vladimir is mentioned only in passing, and the *Igor Tale* can hardly be said to deal with him. Second, no similar syntactic constructions in Old Russian have been found to support Likhachev's idea.

Taking words from a passage in the *Zadonshchina* and from a similar passage in the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli*, the only known literary work before the *Zadonshchina* that closely resembles the *Igor Tale* stylistically, Roman Jakobson reconstructs the passage this way:

Let us, brothers, begin this tale,
because the princes have been sad for the
Russian land from old Vladimir
to the present-day Igor. □

Although I think Jakobson is correct in viewing the lines in question as defective, the line he chooses to insert is unjustified both stylistically and textologically.

These lines are linked only by their position before an *ot* □ *do* construction and by thematic similarity. There are no lexical parallels between the two lines to justify Jakobson's choice of words. In addition, the subordinate conjunction *zane zhe* ("because") has no place in the *Igor Tale*, a paratactic work with very little subordination. As a subordinating conjunction of reason, *bo* ("for") is used throughout the tale.

One can deduce a more likely reconstruction if one compares the unintelligible lines of the *Igor Tale* with the related *Zadonshchina* passage as it appears in all of the copies and in a more complete context.

In three of four copies, the *ot* □ *do* construction contains a number which gives the line a clear meaning. Only copy *K-B*, like the *Igor Tale*, lacks the number and is as meaningless in this respect as the *Igor Tale* passage.

The line from the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli* on which Jakobson bases his reconstruction was cited above.

The problem with basing a reconstruction on the final lines of this text is that the work is probably only a fragment of a larger composition. The final lines may be incomplete, and the words "A v ty dni bolezn' krestiianom" ("But in these days there is trouble for Christians") may express a complete thought independent of the passage following, which contains the *ot* □ *do* construction. Either a number or a phrase establishing spatial or temporal boundaries, as in the *Zadonshchina*, may be missing in the manuscript. That this is indeed the case is suggested by a passage in the sixteenth-century *Stepennaia kniga* which is styled after the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli* or a related work.

As in the *Zadonshchina*, the *ot* □ *do* construction serves to connect historical reference points. The passages differ only in that a time span is used as a connector in the *Zadonshchina*, while the *Stepennaia kniga* focuses on the place from which the princes rule. This suggests that the mysterious passage in the *Igor Tale* lacks a phrase or number specifying spatial or temporal boundaries. Because it is more closely related to the passage in the *Zadonshchina* than to the one in the *Stepennai kniga*, it is likely that the *Igor Tale* formerly contained a number at this point in the narrative, as in the *Zadonshchina*. Letters with a bar, or *titlo*, were used in Old Russian to represent numbers. They could easily become unintelligible if they were copied poorly or if a scribe forgot to include the *titlo*. This could eventually lead to the deletion of the number, which is most likely what has happened in the *Igor Tale* as well as in copy *K-B* of the *Zadonshchina*. Before it was distorted, the *Igor Tale* passage probably read:

Let us, brothers, begin
this tale.
From old Vladimir it was 170 years
to the present-day Igor,
who pulled out his mind with his fortitude. □

Compare the opening words of the Primary Chronicle: "Se nachnem" povest' siiu" ("Now let us begin this tale"). These words are followed by a lengthy passage which establishes geographical reference points. Later the chronicle sets up chronological reference points with a long series of *ot* □ *do* constructions, which are preceded by the words: "temzhe otsele pochnem i chisla polozhim ("thus let us begin from here and place dates").

It is worth noting that neither of the two numbers contained in the *Zadonshchina* copies exactly corresponds to the number of years which elapsed between the Battle on the Kalka and the Battle of Kulikovo (one hundred fifty-seven years). However, the number 170, which appears in copy *U*, exactly coincides with the number of years between the death of Vladimir the Great in 1015 and Igor's campaign. This even points to the remote possibility that the choice of numbers in the *Zadonshchina* might have been influenced by the *Igor Tale*.

Source: Robert Mann, "A Note on the Text of the *Igor Tale*,"

in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2, June, 1980, pp. 281-285.

Adaptations

Prince Igor, an opera written in 1890 by the Russian composer Alexander Porfir'yevich Borodin, is based on in *The Song of Igor's Campaign*. Borodin added to the tale some episodes and descriptions from two Russian chronicles.

In the 1920s, Russian artist Ivan Golikov painted a series of lacquer miniatures illustrating *The Song of Igor's Campaign*. These are considered to be masterpieces of this Russian art form. According to M.A. Nekrasova, "A distinctive and expansive rhythm conveys the determined spirit of the Russian warriors .... The colour blue ... is always threatening. Blue flashes of lightning rend the clouds on the morning of the battle at the Kayala river; Svyatoslav sees a blue wine containing deadly poison in his dream; and the werewolf Vseslav is shrouded in blue mist. Golikov makes extensive use of this symbolic meaning of the colour, especially when depicting the eclipse of the sun over the heads of lgor's army." More information on this genre can be found at the Web site, "Russian Lacquer miniatures," http://www.miniature.ru/index16.htm [June 11, 2000].

Topics for Further Study

Epics such as *The Song of Igor's Campaign* often glorify war, or at least view it as a legitimate, even laudable, way of pursuing political goals. Examine how attitudes towards war, and what war itself involves, have changed in recent times, especially since the Vietnam War. Are our heroes today warriors like Igor, or have we come to value different virtues? If Igor's campaign had taken place today, for example, what would have been the reaction of the world to the conduct of the Russians after they were victorious on the first day of battle? (Lines 151-70.)

Russians treasure *The Song of Igor's Campaign* as part of their literary and national heritage, yet the epic records not a great victory but a catastrophic defeat. Research and examine other examples in history of how a great defeat has been enshrined in a nation's mythology and given a positive meaning. Examples might include the way Serbian nationalism has been fueled by a defeat suffered by Serbian forces in Kosovo in 1380; and the way the British turned the evacuation of their troops from Dunkirk in France in 1940 into a kind of moral victory. An example from American history might be the heroic but doomed defense of the Alamo against Mexican forces in San Antonio, Texas, in 1836. Is there something about a brave defeat that moves us more than a great victory?

Kievan Rus was torn apart by internal conflict between rival principalities. No single group had the power to dominate the others. When the Soviet Union was formed following the Russian revolution in 1917, what methods did the communist government use to try to ensure that a vast country, full of disparate ethnic groups, would remain loyal to the Soviet state?

What Do I Read Next?

Historian John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*, 1995, is a riveting account of what it must have been like for the soldiers who actually fought in a medieval battle. The example he uses is the battle of Agincourt in 1415 between English and French armies, in which the weapons used did not differ much from those used by the armies of Igor and the Kumans. Keegan also discusses the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), one of the greatest novels ever written, is another epic of war on Russian soil, describing how the Russians beat back the French invasion of 1812.

Borderland: A Journey through the History of Ukraine, by Anna Reid (1999), is a journalist's exploration of present-day Ukraine that gives a picture of its tragic past and its hopes for the future.

Serge A. Zenkovsky's *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 1963, includes some extracts from the *Primary Chronicle* of Kievan Rus. The most interesting pieces are "The Apostle Andrew Comes to Russia," "The Founding of the City of Kiev," "The Beginning of the Russian State and the Arrival of Rurik," "Vladimir Christianizes Russia" and "Yaroslav the Wise."

Slovo, the newsletter of the Slavic Interest Group (vol. 5 issue 1, Fall, 1999), http://www.uwplatt. edu/~goldschp/news16.html [June 11, 2000], features an interesting article, "Wild Animals in Ancient Rus," by Peotr Alexeivich Novgorodski. It describes the wild animals that were common in Europe's primeval forests a thousand years ago, including those mentioned in *The Song of Igor's Campaign*. Some of these are now extinct. The auroch, for example, was a wild ox that Igor's brother Vsevelod derived his nickname from ("Wild Bull"). It became extinct in the seventeenth century.

Further Study

Lindstrom, Thais S., *A Concise History of Russian Literature*, Volume 1, New York University Press, 1966.

The first chapter contains a useful account of the origins of Kievan Rus, and gives an informative overview of *The Song of Igor's Campaign*.

Mirsky, D. S., *A History of Russian Literature*, edited and abridged by Francis J. Whitfield, Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

A good one-volume history of Russian literature from the earliest days to the twentieth century.

Thompson, John M., *Russia and the Soviet Union*, 4th edition, Westview Press, 1998.

The first chapter, "Ancient Russia and the Kievan State," gives a good overview of the development of Kievan Rus and its political and social structure.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Epics for Students (EfS) 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, EfS 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 EfS 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 EfS 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 EfS 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 EfS 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

EfS 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 Epics 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 EfS series.

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

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

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

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Epics 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 EfS, 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 Epics 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 EfS, 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.

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The editor of Epics 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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