Take Me Out Study Guide

Take Me Out by Richard Greenberg

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Introduction

Take Me Out, Richard Greenberg's 2002 Broadway hit, explores with wit and compassion what might happen if a player on a major league baseball team were to announce that he is gay. Greenberg brings out many attitudes toward homosexuality by drawing his main character as a very specific, unique individual. Darren Lemming is *the* star player who has led his team to win two Worlds Series in a row. He comes from a middle-class, biracial family but has never faced any sort of racial prejudice. He is the ideal ballplayer on the ideal team, until the day he decides to announce his sexual orientation to his team: then his relationships change with his coach; his teammates; his new business manager, who is gay; his best friend, who is devoutly religious; and especially with the homophobic pitcher recently up from the minors, who refers to Lemming by using an offensive slur during an interview. The play is full of insights about baseball, masculinity, and identity in the twenty-first century, told with humor, and ending in tragedy.

Greenberg was a constant presence in the Broadway theater after his first works were produced in the 1980s. He has won or been nominated for most major awards available to playwrights, including the Pulitzer Prize, Drama Desk, the Oppenheimer Award, and the PEN/Laura Pels Award. *Take Me Out* was the Tony Award for Best Play the year that it opened, along with garnering Tonys for best actor and best director, but it is also known for generating controversy for including male nudity on the legitimate stage. *Take Me Out* was published by Faber and Faber in 2003.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: American

Birthdate: 1958

Richard Greenberg was born in East Meadow, New York, on February 22, 1958 or 1959□official sources conflict. He was raised there in a middle-class household. His father, Leon, was an executive for the Century Theaters movie chain, and his mother, Shirley, was a housewife. After graduating from East Meadow High School in 1976, Greenberg attended Princeton University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1980; one of his instructors was the famed novelist Joyce Carol Oates. He went to graduate school at Harvard University from 1981 to 1982, studying fiction writing and finding that he did not like it as much as he did acting: at that point, he decided to try play writing. The play he wrote earned him acceptance to the Yale School of Drama, where he completed an M.F.A. in 1985.

Greenberg's first produced play, *The Bloodletters*, drew attention from critics when it was first produced in New York in 1985, and after that, Greenberg remained active in the theater world. By 2006, he had produced twenty-eight plays, almost always supported by critical raves. For a brief while in 2003, three of his plays were running on Broadway at once: *Take Me Out*, *The Violet Hour*, and a revival of 1988's *Eastern Standard*. At one point in the early 2000s, he had five plays in production at one time.

Though he lived in New York City much of his adult life, Greenberg worked with directors across the country. He was a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre and an associate artist at South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California. He won numerous awards, including the 2003 Tony Award for Best Play for *Take Me Out* and the George Oppenheimer Award and the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award, both for *Three Days of Rain*. He has also been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and a nominee for the Drama Desk Award, both for *Take Me Out*. In 1996, Greenberg and playwright Arthur Miller were the first recipients of the PEN/Laura Pels Award for Drama.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Take Me Out starts with Kippy Sunderstrom, shortstop for the fictional major league team the Empires, talking to the audience, trying to pinpoint exactly when □the whole mess□ started. He explains that Darren Lemming, the team's star center fielder, was an audience favorite, encouraged by all. After the All-Star break, the team started losing and brought up a relief pitcher from the minor leagues, and *that* might have been the start of it all. Then he settles on the problem starting on a day when Darren gave a press conference: the stage lights come up on Darren surrounded by the other members of the team as he speaks to the public about his hope that his being gay will not change how people act toward him.

The setting changes to the clubhouse, where Kippy and Darren discuss what this announcement will mean. Kippy says that the other players are certain to feel a little uncomfortable about Darren's sexual preference and will be a little resentful about not having been told earlier. Darren counters that he did tell Skipper, who assured him that the team would support him, but Kippy's warning comes true when teammates Martinez and Rodriguez pass by, grunting something inaudible. Kippy says that he would like Darren and whoever he is dating to come to the house for dinner with his wife and three kids, but Darren has no particular love interest at the moment.

Jason Chenier, the team's new catcher, enters. He approaches Darren timidly to say that, though he never felt comfortable talking to him, he feels all right about it now after the announcement. In trying to compliment homosexuals, he refers to a book that someone he knows once read; he associates ancient Greeks with homosexuality and then incorrectly attributes the Egyptian pyramids to the Greeks. Kippy and Darren laugh about his ineptitude, and Jason leaves, embarrassed.

The lights come up on the locker room. Darren is by his locker, undressing, when Toddy Koovitz comes in from a shower. When Toddy takes off his towel, he becomes angry that he now must be self-conscious about being naked in the locker room around Darren, despite Darren's assurance that he has no sexual interest in him at all. Toddy tells Darren that his importance to the team will not keep God from punishing him, and he gives examples of other ballplayers□Roberto Clemente, Thurman Munson, and Lou Gehrig□who he says were struck down by God. Darren dismisses him with bemusement.

Kippy returns to the spotlight as narrator, wondering why Darren chose to reveal his sexual orientation at that particular time, and the scene goes to a lounge where Darren and his best friend in baseball, Davey Battle, are drinking after a game in which the Empires defeated Davey's team. The two friends discuss their lives: Davey is a religious man with a wife and three kids, and Darren is mysterious and sarcastic, unwilling to talk about love. Their discussion ends with Davey telling Darren that he should want his true

nature known to the world, and a week later Darren gives his press conference about being gay.

Mason Marzac comes onto the stage, introducing himself to the audience as a man who cared nothing about baseball until Darren made headlines with his announcement. Darren joins him onstage and the audience sees their first meeting, as Mason explains that he is the accountant assigned to handle Darren's finances now that his previous accountant, Abe, has retired to Florida. Darren notes that his commercials only run on late-night television since the announcement, assuming that his sexual identity is probably disturbing, and he implies that Mason is assigned to him because Mason is gay. Mason counters that he is, in fact, quite good at making money with the investments of people like Darren, celebrities who would like to make money for a time in the future when they will not be able to work. He asks Darren to select a charity to receive donations from him. When Mason tries to thank him on behalf of the gay community for being open about his sexuality, Darren counters that he does not feel like he is part of any community.

Kippy returns to the stage, explaining that, soon after, the team fell onto a slump and started losing games at an unprecedented rate. A relief pitcher, Shane Mungitt, was brought up from the minor leagues. Mason returns to the stage to list the philosophic things about baseball that he finds appealing: its symmetry, its democratic rules, and the leisurely pace it takes, as when a batter who has hit the ball out of the park is still required to take the time to trot around the infield, touching each base.

Shane comes onstage, and Darren and Kippy approach him, asking about his life. He was raised in orphanages after his father shot his mother and then himself, leaving the child Shane trapped with the bodies for three days. After telling them his story, Shane laughs maniacally. Kippy recognizes his problem as an inability to speak clearly and vows to help him. Before he gets a chance, though, Shane speaks out in a television interview, alienating himself from his team by talking about □colored people□ and □gooks□ and □spics□ and □coons□ on the team, saying that the worst thing is that he has to shower every night with a □*faggot*.□ The team, watching him on television, is frozen with horror.

Act 2

The second act begins with the team's manager, William R. Danziger (or □Skipper□) reading a formal letter that he has written to Darren, addressing him distantly as □Mr. Lemming□ and stating his objection to Shane Mungitt's prejudiced remarks. The letter ends stating that, though he supports Darren, he wishes that he were not a baseball player.

Kippy enters and summarizes the situation: since Shane was so crass on television, most people have contacted Darren to express support, a situation that Darren finds degrading. Kippy points out that this incident has had a humanizing effect on the myth

surrounding the team's best player, but Darren complains that going from godly to human is a demotion.

Because Shane has been suspended, the team starts to lose again. The resentment of the players is stated by Toddy Koovitz, who thinks that Darren planned for Shane to speak out against him, for the sake of gaining publicity. Kippy's theory is that the members of the Empires have become self-conscious, afraid of doing things that might make them look gay.

Shane returns to clean out his locker, and the teammates refuse to talk to him. Later, in the locker room, Martinez and Rodriguez speak to each other in Spanish, excluding their teammates: Kippy claims to recognize some of their discussion to be a criticism of Kawabata's pitching. He then claims to be able to translate Kawabata's reaction as a discussion of a classic Japanese film. As Kawabata speaks, Kippy translates his words as expressing his loneliness in America.

Shane talks about a letter that he wrote to the Skipper, apologizing for having offended Darren Lemming, explaining his own intellectual weakness and accepting the idea that he should be punished. The letter has become public, and the press soon reports the sordid details of his childhood, and he becomes a sympathetic figure in the fans' views.

Darren goes to Skipper to ask about the rumor that Shane will be allowed back on the team, registering his objection. Skipper tells him that the other team members would not mind Shane coming back if it means that they would start winning again, while Darren believes that it would be enough if Shane's return offended him, because he is the team's best player.

Darren calls Mason Marzac after the meeting and asks him to meet him at the stadium the following night. Mason narrates his thrill with being at the game, now that he has been following it and can appreciate baseball's subtleties. After the game, Darren meets him and explains that he is thinking of retiring from baseball the very next day. Mason tells him that he does not have enough invested to retire that early. He convinces Darren to stay with the game, at least until the next day's game against Davey Battle's team, which, Mason says, he has told the press is his favorite thing to do. Mason implores him, both as a gay man and as a baseball fan, to reconsider. Darren ends the meeting promising not to retire the next day.

The following day marks Shane's return to the team. Davey comes to the Empires' clubhouse to talk with Darren for the first time since Darren's public announcement that he is gay. Kippy has a brief discussion with Davey while he is leaving. At the same time, Shane is taking a pre-game shower, and Darren joins him. Darren's presence makes him nervous, and Darren eggs him on, taunting him about his racism and homophobia. He ends up going to Shane, grabbing him, and kissing him, pretending that he and Shane are lovers, though Shane shouts at him throughout the experience.

The ballgame goes well for eight innings, with Kawabata pitching a perfect game for eight innings and two outs. With one out to go, the opposing team starts scoring, and

Shane is sent in to pitch against Davey Battle. Shane's first pitch goes straight to Davey's head, killing him.

Act 3

Act 3 starts with Takeshi Kawabata talking to the audience, explaining the constant media coverage of Davey's death. Attention shifts to Mason taking a late-night phone call from Darren, who is sad and angry about the events. Kippy calls on Darren's other line to express his support and love for him. When he returns to his conversation with Mason, Mason asks Darren if Shane is going to be arrested. He says that some of the other players heard him coming out of the locker room before the game, muttering that he hates them all and vowing to kill somebody. Darren tells Mason that they should arrest Shane and that he should be arrested himself.

Kippy introduces the last meeting between Darren and Davey, in the clubhouse before the game. Davey is angry and sarcastic: At one point he asks if Darren is *fleering* at him, using an archaic word for smirking in derision. Davey finally confronts him directly, asking him if he has been thinking of him sexually over the eight years of their friendship. He also accuses Darren of using the public reputation that Davey has cultivated to hide his secret. They part angry with each other: Davey, to go on to the conversation with Kippy that is dramatized in act 2, and Darren to the scene in the shower with Shane.

At a Major League Baseball inquest about the fatal pitch, Shane refuses to talk, saying that he wants to speak with Kippy. Despite his reluctance, Kippy decides to go to him. But Darren decides to go along.

When they meet with him, they find that Shane mistakenly believes that there is a chance that he might be able to rejoin the team. At length, Kippy makes him see that he will never play baseball again. When he turns his attention to Darren, Shane refers to the attack in the shower. He also reveals the fact that he heard Darren and Davey cursing at each other when they parted before the game. When Kippy tries to find out whether the fatal pitch was on purpose, Shane says that Kippy could answer for him, just as Kippy wrote the letter that gained him enough sympathy to be let back on the team after he was thrown off for the offensive interview.

In narration, Kippy explains to the audience that the Empires won the World Series and that no charges were leveled against Shane, who returned to wherever he came from: one night Shane bought a shotgun and went from one store to another, shooting up all of the bottles of milk, and so he ended up in jail.

After the last game, Kippy talks with Darren, expressing his hope that they might someday be friends again. Before he leaves, Mason shows up. Being new to the game, Mason is enthusiastic about the team's win and only somewhat aware of the emotional trauma that the team has suffered. Darren begins to mention retiring again, but Mason stops him, feeling it inappropriate on the night of the World's Series win. Darren invites

him to the party, giving him one if his World's Series rings to wear (though he admonishes Mason when he holds his hand up to look at the ring in an unmanly way, reminding him that □it's gonna be a roomful of *jocks* □). The play ends with Mason ruminating about what they will do until the next season starts in spring.

Characters

Davey Battle

Davey Battle, Darren Lemmings's best friend, is a star player, but the team that he plays for is not as good as the Empires, which, as Davey points out, allows him to stand out more. Darren chides Davey for his middle-class religious values: his happy marriage, his three children, his unwillingness to use God's name in vain. Davey encourages Darren to keep no secrets, to live his life publicly, which leads to Darren's announcement about his sexual orientation.

Davey comes into the Empires' clubhouse the night that Shane Mungitt returns from his suspension, flouting the rule that prohibits members of the opposing team from entering a team's quarters. He and Darren have an argument, during which it is revealed that he has refused to talk to Darren since his announcement about being gay. Having thought that Darren was just a wild, successful bachelor, Davey feels betrayed to find out that he harbored a secret about his sexual orientation. Darren feels betrayed by Davey's anger and tells him to drop dead. Shane overhears the end of the conversation, and his first pitch to Davey hits him in the head and kills him.

Jason Chenier

Jason Chenier is a catcher who has been with the Empires for three weeks. Since coming to the team, he has been too shy to talk to the star player, Darren Lemming. After Darren announces that he is gay, however, Jason feels that he can approach him. He awkwardly tries to compliment Darren by saying that the ancient Greeks, who are associated with homosexuality, did great things such as building the pyramids (which the ancient Egyptians actually built). Darren and Kippy laugh at his ignorance, though he does not seem to know he is being mocked.

In act 2, when Kippy is talking to his teammates about their □stray homosexual impulses,□ Jason mistakenly believes for a moment that Kippy is talking to him in particular.

William R. Danziger

See Skipper

Takeshi Kawabata

Takeshi Kawabata, the star pitcher for the Empires, started his first season on the team playing brilliantly, but in the second half, his game would go to pieces some time around the seventh inning. To make up for his slump, the team brings Shane Mungitt up from

the minor leagues. In act 2, Kippy pretends to translate Kawabata's Japanese into English, giving his words meanings that fit an Asian stereotype, about his ancestors and honor and death. Kawabata speaks directly to the audience in imperfect English at the start of act 3, showing himself to be quite aware of what is going on around him and willfully ignoring it.

Toddy Koovitz

Toddy Koovitz, a member of the Empires, becomes belligerent after the announcement that Darren is gay. He feels uncomfortable about being nude in the locker room with Darren and resents the fact that he is made to feel this way. He warns Darren that his importance to the team as a player will not save him from God's punishment, citing such examples as Roberto Clemente and Thurman Munson, who died in separate plane crashes, and Lou Gehrig, who died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Toddy is an illiterate man, given to pronouncing words incorrectly, such as saying □sanc-chewy□ for □sanctuary□ and □rackled□ for □racked.□ Speaking of the fact that amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease, he says □Gehrig's got a *fate* named after him,□ which leads Darren to note, □Ya got a real sorta poetry of the ignoramus goin' on.□ To prove his point about Toddy's lack of intelligence, Darren recalls a time, during a playoff game, when Toddy caught a fly ball and, thinking it the final out of the inning, handed it to a girl in the stands, while two runners from the opposing team scored.

After Shane Mungitt makes a public, very derogatory statement about Darren Lemming's sexual orientation, Toddy expresses the belief that Darren might have arranged the whole controversy to gain public sympathy.

Darren Lemming

Darren Lemming is the play's central character. He is the center fielder for the Empires, an excellent player on a team that has won the World Series twice in a row. Darren is biracial, with a white father and a black mother, and was raised in a stable middle-class environment, which, along with his talent as a ballplayer, has helped make him a favorite of the fans.

After a talk about authenticity with his friend and competitor Davey Battle, Darren holds a press conference, at which he announces that he is gay. His teammates are generally supportive: some, such as Jason Chenier, find him to be approachable in a way that he never was before, while others, such as Toddy Koovitz, resent the intrusion of sexuality into the private confines of the locker room. His public approval suffers some, with his television endorsements moved to late night hours.

When Shane Mungitt, a new player, bluntly refers to Darren as a □*faggot* □ in an interview, public reaction supports Darren. Darren insists that Shane should be thrown off of the team because it is what he, as the star player, desires. The Skipper refuses,

and Darren mulls over the idea of retiring that very night, but his accountant, Mason Marzac, talks him out of it. On the day of Shane's return, Darren goes to where he is showering alone, mocks and taunts him, then grabs him and kisses him.

The first time that he speaks with Davey after announcing that he is gay, Darren finds that he misunderstood his friend earlier. Davey was not encouraging him to live openly as a gay man, and, in fact, Darren's sexual orientation offends Davey's religious background. They part angrily, cursing at each other. Shane overhears this, which is one reason that he purposely throws the pitch that kills Davey.

Steeped with guilt, Darren goes on to play some of his best baseball, and the Empires win their third World Series. After the last game, he is depressed and thinking of leaving, but he is joined by Mason, whom he asks to attend the celebration dinner as his date, indicating what might be the start of a new love.

Martinez

One of the Spanish-speaking members of the Empires, Martinez is always with Rodriguez and is indistinguishable from him.

Mason Marzac

Mason Marzac is an investment counselor who is assigned to handle Darren Lemming's money when his predecessor retires. He admits to having been uninterested in baseball until Darren announced that he was gay. His business association with Darren, along with his personal interest in him, draws Mason to baseball, so that by the end of the play he is an avid fan.

Mason is, by his own admission, quite successful as an investor: □I have taken some clients with fairly modest portfolios and made them *rather* wealthy,□ he says after Darren suspects that he has been assigned to him only because he is gay. He is enthralled by Darren from their first meeting, captivated by him as a hero to gay people everywhere because he has talked publicly about his sexual orientation. Darren, who takes his own eminence for granted, is bemused by Mason's devotion.

As the play goes on, they become friends. Mason can look at baseball as a theorist, as an outsider, speculating on the abstractions of players' records or the social significance of the pointless trot around the base when a ball has been hit out of the park. Darren decides that, to be part of the baseball world, Mason needs a nickname, and he takes to calling him Mars.

When Shane is allowed back on the team after publicly complaining about having to shower with Darren, Darren threatens to quit, and he calls Mason, as his financial advisor, to find out if he can afford such a move. The day of Davey Battle's funeral, though, he calls Mason for solace. He asks to hear about Mason's life but is too distracted to pay attention.

After the Empires win the World Series, Mason joins Darren at the stadium, and Darren invites him to the celebratory party as his date. He gives Mason one of his World Series rings to wear.

Shane Mungitt

When he first introduces Shane Mungitt to the audience, Kippy, as narrator, points out what a good pitcher Shane is, though lacking intelligence, and then notes that □he didn't seem to like the game.□ From the start, it is clear that Shane's skill is tied to certain psychological problems carried over from childhood. He is aloof from the other players, and, when questioned by Darren and Kippy, explains the terrible trauma of his early life: his father shot Shane's mother and himself when Shane was just a little boy, and he was trapped with their decaying bodies for three days, dehydrated when he was finally found; after that, he spent the rest of his childhood in one orphanage after another. The only thing that he ever learned to do well is pitch. When he tells them this tragic story, Shane laughs, although he says it is not made up.

Shane has such poor communication skills that during an interview with a reporter he refers to his teammates with derogatory racial slurs. He calls them □a funny bunch of guys,□ apparently unaware that the words he is using are offensive, and then elaborates by calling them □the gooks an' spics an' the coons an' like that.□ What makes the biggest headlines, though, is when he refers to Darren Lemming, the star of the team who has recently gone public about his homosexuality, as □a *faggot*.□ After that, Shane is suspended from the Empires.

The letter that gets him reinstated to the team, despite its characteristic misspellings and twisted grammar, is found later to have been written by Kippy, without Shane's knowledge. The day that Shane comes back, he overhears Darren arguing with Davey Battle, who plays for the opposing team. Shane, who has a ritual of taking three showers before each game, is in the shower alone when Darren enters, bringing to life the very fear Shane had complained about to the interviewer. He starts out making fun of Shane, but soon becomes physical, grabbing Shane and kissing him. When Shane is brought into the game, he throws a pitch that kills the first batter he faces, Davey Battle.

In jail, Shane pathetically believes that he might be allowed to come back to the team, not realizing that his baseball career is over. Released without being charged, he fades into obscurity, until one night when he drinks too much and takes a gun from one store to another, shooting milk bottles. He ends up in prison.

Rodriguez

Rodriguez is never onstage without the other Spanish-speaking member of the Empires, Martinez. Their conversations together are a mystery to the other team members.

Skipper

Skipper is William R. Danziger, the manager of the Empires. He is known for his personal skills, his ability to be tough when he needs to be and gentle when it is called for. Although Darren Lemming is loved by his public and his teammates, he is particularly important to Skipper, who, as Kippy points out, "thinks he *invented* Darren."

After Darren surprises his teammates by publicly announcing that he is gay, and Shane Mungitt publicly insults him because of it, Skipper writes him a formal letter, expressing both his support and also his frustration. Referring to him as "Mr. Lemming," he tells Darren that he would be proud to have a son like him, would support him if he were gay, and in fact would be glad, if his son were gay, if he had a lover like Darren. He ends the letter by saying that his feelings are hurt that Darren has brought his sexuality into the game of baseball.

After the decision has been made to allow Shane back onto the team, Darren goes to Skipper to explain that, because he is the team's star player, his opinion about the matter should take precedence over other factors, but Skipper just tells him that he should be able to adjust to the changing situation. Darren notes that Skipper refers to his affection for him in the past tense, a point that Skipper does not deny.

Kippy Sunderstrom

Kippy serves often as the narrator of the play, speaking directly to the audience and giving background details.

He is Darren Lemming's closest friend on the Empires. Their conversations are philosophical. Darren describes him as "The most intelligent man in Major League baseball," but Kippy counters that he only seems intelligent because he is not as large as Swedes usually are. He is the person with whom Darren will joke about the intellectual weakness of the other team members such as Koovitz, Chenier, and especially Shane Mungitt. He is good at understanding the nuances of situations and explaining them to Darren and the other teammates. When Martinez and Rodriguez speak Spanish, and when Kawabata speaks Japanese, Kippy says that he can translate what they are saying, though his translations are vague and unconvincing.

When Shane has been thrown off of the team for speaking out offensively in public about Darren's sexual orientation, Kippy arranges to have him reinstated by writing an apologetic letter and signing his name to it, a fact that does not become public until after Shane has killed a batter. His secret is even more poignant because the batter who is killed, Davey Battle, is Darren's best friend off of the team, and Kippy shows a little jealousy because of it. His last words to Davey, said jokingly, are "We're gonna kill you."

The night of Davey's funeral, Kippy calls Darren and tells him that he may have been a little jealous of Davey's friendship with him. He tells Darren that he loves him, though he tries to take some of the seriousness out of the situation by saying □that's *fraught*, given the circumstances, but you know I mean it in an unfraught sort of way.□ At the end of the season, he confesses to Darren that he went to college on an academic scholarship, not an athletic one, but chose baseball over intellectual pursuits because playing is a celebration of life.

Themes

Culture Clash

Take Me Out derives much of its dramatic tension from the contrast of two subcultures that have traditionally been kept separated: homosexuality and major league sports. Greenberg draws attention to the novelty of this situation by making Darren Lemming biracial, which his teammates and fans not only accept but actively support: as Kippy says in his introductory speech, baseball is □one of the few realms of American life in which people of color are routinely adulated by people of pallor,□ and Darren, being comfortable about his mixed heritage, is admired as someone who represents the best of both cultures.

Homosexuality is new to the world of baseball, though, and the play centers on Darren's teammates' struggle to adjust to it. Skipper, in a formal letter, expresses his wholehearted support for Darren as a gay man, but he also expresses his disappointment that Darren has openly brought homosexuality to baseball. Jason Chenier, a new player, sees Darren's announcement about his sexual orientation as a weakness that brings Darren, the team's star player, down closer to his level: while he was previously too intimidated to approach Darren, after the announcement he adapts a somewhat patronizing attitude toward him, citing references to past achievements by homosexuals that appear to be aimed at making Darren feel good about himself. Toddy Koovitz, on the other hand, turns angry and suspicious about the news, unsure about how the knowledge about Darren's orientation might change the locker room dynamic and afraid that it might make him change his own comfortable habits. Davey Battle, who is Darren's best friend before the announcement, rejects him with hostility upon finding out he is gay: the religious Davey cannot reconcile Darren's sexuality with his own views on the subject.

Take Me Out also shows the reverse situation, with gay culture, represented by quiet intellectual Mason Marzac, being introduced to the culture of professional sports. Mason comes into Darren's life with very little knowledge of baseball, but grateful to Darren for being open about his homosexuality. Because of his involvement with Darren, though, he begins following the game and becomes engrossed in it. He spins elaborate, abstract theories about the hidden significance of many of the rituals surrounding the game that baseball's traditional fans might take for granted.

Social Classes

Although it may seem to some that Shane Mungitt is the villain of this play, Greenberg draws the character very carefully to show that Shane is not bad at heart but that he is instead a victim of the lower-class background from which he comes. Even though Shane uses insulting words to describe his teammates and speaks derisively about Darren's sexual orientation in public (unlike players like Toddy Koovitz, who are just as

derisive, but not in public), he also shows that he is disappointed that he cannot socialize with those same teammates, showing that his problem is not one of hatred, but of being too poor at communication to effectively express what he means.

Shane is the opposite of Darren Lemming in almost every way. Being the product of a □triumphant yet cozy middle-class marriage□ has given Darren the education that he needs to speak his mind and the self-assurance that he needs to do so. When things go poorly for Daren, such as when Shane publicly insults him, Darren is in a position to insist that his will be followed or to quit if it is not. Shane, on the other hand, was traumatized early on by his parents' deaths, and all of the anger that presumably came before it and followed in a succession of orphanages. He has not been raised to have the financial resources that Darren has, and more important, he lacks the emotional security to adapt to new situations. The one thing that Shane and Darren have in common is that they are both excellent baseball players: in putting such diverse characters into contact with each other, the play makes a point about how baseball transcends the ideas of social class that usually keep people separated in U.S. society.

Moral Confusion

When Davey Battle is introduced in the play, the audience is told that he is Darren Lemming's best friend. By the end, however, it turns out that Davey and Darren are the causes of each other's destruction, due to misunderstandings that they both have about the other's moral perspective.

In their first scene together, Darren and Davey joke with each other good-naturedly about their differences while maintaining their basic affection. Darren does not recognize the depth of Davey's religious convictions, and Davey does not see just how far from his worldview Darren actually is. Darren jokes about Davey's willingness to use some swear words but not others and about the fact that Davey will drink beer in a bar: he thinks that Davey is using their friendship to convince the public that he is a regular person. Davey tells Darren that he believes, regardless of what Darren thinks about himself, that he is a good man at heart who will feel better about himself once he tries leading an open and honest life. He knows that Darren is not in a loving, committed relationship but has no idea that he is gay.

After Darren's sexual orientation is announced to the public, Davey approaches him with anger. He refers to homosexuality as a demon and to Darren's □ugliness,□ and says that he would never have encouraged Darren to be true to himself if he had known that he was □a pervert.□ His anger and confusion are so great that he even accuses Darren of pretending to be his friend in order to have sex with him. The Christian love that Davey showered on Darren earlier, when he thought that he just needed confidence, is pushed aside by intolerance.

Style

Equivocation

Greenberg's title phrase, *Take Me Out*, is an example of equivocation because it can be read or interpreted in different ways.

The title's most obvious reference, to a reader just approaching this play, is that the words □take me out□ are the first words sung in baseball's unofficial anthem. At almost every baseball stadium throughout the country, each game has a seventh-inning stretch, when fans are invited to rise to their feet, stretch their limbs, and sing, □Take Me Out to the Ballgame.□ This song, written in 1908, is estimated to be the third most frequently sung song in the United States, after □The Star-Spangled Banner□ and □Happy Birthday to You.□ It is an inextricable part of baseball culture.

But this play is also about romantic relations. When he first announces his sexual orientation to the world, Darren Lemming does not have a particular romantic interest in mind, a fact that he states emphatically to his friend Kippy Sunderstrom. By the end of the play, though, he has enough tentative connection to Mason Marzac for the audience to see a relationship starting to form, culminating is his asking Mason to be his □date□ to the celebratory party after the last game. Although Mason never explicitly tells Daren to □take me out,□ the sense of going out and asking someone out is clearly implied in the title.

A third sense of the phrase is that it represents the opposite of what athletes usually request of their coaches. When watching from the bench and feeling enthused about being able to help the team, an athlete will often tell the coach to put him in: this phrase is highlighted in one of baseball's most famous songs, John Fogerty's 1985 tune □Centerfield,□ with its refrain, □Put me in coach, I'm ready to play today.□ Greenberg's use of the phrase in its negative form might be a reference to the fact that Darren Lemming is a reluctant player, planning his retirement from baseball, or it could refer to the way that Shane Mungitt destroys his career, implicitly asking to be taken out of the game. Ominously the phrase also suggests an invitation to be murdered.

Dramatic Narration

Several times in *Take Me Out*, characters step away from the dramatic situation that is being acted onstage to talk directly to the audience. Kippy Sunderstrom does this most often, but it is also done by Mason Marzac and Takeshi Kawabata.

The idea of directly giving audiences information that they need, rather than working the information into the situation that the characters are dramatizing, is hardly a new one. It has its roots in the dramas of the great Greek playwrights Aeschylus (525-456 b.c.e..), Sophocles (496-406 b.c.e..), and Euripides (480-406 b.c.e..). Their plays relied on the use of a chorus of citizens to provide background information to the audience. As drama

evolved, however, playwrights tended not to have characters directly tell background information, called exposition, to the audience. The usual method has been to let the action and dialogue that takes place between the characters onstage convey all of the information that audiences need to know. By having Kippy narrate the story in the way that he does, Greenberg relies on a device that goes back to the roots of Western drama.

The speech that Kawabata gives at the beginning of act 3 resembles a specific kind of narration, a soliloquy. Different than narration, the soliloquy reveals the speaker's internal thoughts and emotions. Mason's speech about baseball as □a perfect metaphor for hope in a democratic society□ is also a soliloquy, though it does not look like one to the casual eye. The speech does not convey any information that is necessary to understanding the play's story but is instead meant to give Mason's personal perspective. While a soliloquy gives private thoughts and emotions, Mason's speech sounds more like a philosophy lecture. This is because he is an analytic, dispassionate character himself, whose personality thrives on developing new theories: what sounds like a lecture is an accurate reflection of his inner emotions.

Historical Context

Homosexuality in Organized Sports

When *Take Me Out* was produced, no players for any major league sports teams were openly homosexual. The first player in any team sport to come out about his sexual orientation was Dave Kopay, an NFL running back who was retired for several years before going public. The NFL also produced Roy Simmons, who played offensive guard for the Giants and Redskins from 1979 to 1983 and then revealed his orientation on the Phil Donahue talk show in 1992, and Esera Tuaolo, an offensive lineman who announced that he was gay and that he and his partner had two adopted children, but kept his private life a secret until 2002□three years after he left football.

Major League Baseball had only had two admittedly gay players and one gay umpire, and none of them came out to the public about their sexual orientation while their careers were going on. The first player was Glenn Burke, an outfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Oakland Athletics during the 1970s. Burke kept his life as a homosexual a secret from the public: at one point, the Dodgers offered to pay for an opulent honeymoon if he would participate in a sham marriage to a woman, but he refused. In 1980, after a brief retirement, he returned to the Oakland A's, and their manager at the time, Billy Martin, made disparaging remarks about not wanting gays in the clubhouse, although he named no names. Burke injured his knee that year and retired. He revealed his orientation during a 1982 interview with *Inside Sports*, and went on to be a participant in the 1982 and 1986 Gay Games. Although he was a barrier breaker, he died a forgotten man: after a car accident ruined his leg in 1987, he spiraled into drugs, which led to jail and then homelessness. He died of AIDS in 1995.

Billy Bean, who was an outfielder for the Tigers, Giants, and Padres from 1987 to 1995, came out publicly in 1999. His autobiography, *Going the Other Way*, tells of the jibes that he had to suffer from his teammates about his sexuality, including the fact that he felt compelled to skip the funeral of his domestic partner, who had died of AIDS, in order to keep their relationship a secret.

Dave Pallone was a major league umpire for eighteen years but was quietly dismissed in 1988 because of rumors about his sexual orientation. Later, he published an autobiography and traveled the country giving speeches about sexual orientation, diversity, and acceptance.

While there are still no openly gay players in the four most prominent team sports□baseball, football, basketball, and hockey□there are gay athletes in sports that compete on an individual basis. The most prominent of these are tennis superstar Martina Navratilova, who came out about her sexuality in 1981 after speculation about her relationship with author Rita Mae Brown, and Greg Louganis, one of the greatest Olympic divers in history, who went public about his orientation in 1994. In a *Sports Illustrated* poll published in March of 2006, a majority of players in each of the four

major professional sports said that they would welcome an openly gay teammate, with 61 percent of major league baseball players responding positively, according to the Outsports.com website.

The John Rocker Controversy

A few years before *Take Me Out* was produced, John Rocker, a relief pitcher for the Atlanta Braves, became famous around the world for controversial comments similar to those made by Shane Mungitt in the play. In an interview with *Sports Illustrated* published in 2000, Rocker, who had been harassed by New York fans during the 1999 playoffs against the Mets, said that he would never be able to play in New York:

It's the most hectic, nerve-racking city. Imagine having to take the [Number] 7 train to the ballpark, looking like you're [riding through] Beirut next to some kid with purple hair next to some queer with AIDS right next to some dude who just got out of jail for the fourth time right next to some 20-year-old mom with four kids. It's depressing.

An overwhelming public outcry followed, during which widely diverse fans all around the country called sports shows to voice their outrage. For weeks he was mocked on comedy shows such as *The Tonight Show*, *The Late Show*, and *Saturday Night Live*. He was suspended for the first twenty-eight games of the season, though his suspension was later revised to just fourteen games.

At Rocker's first game in New York after his suspension, Mets officials called on ten times the usual number of police for protection. Beer sales were limited, and a special protective cover was installed over the Braves' bullpen for protection. Before the game, a taped apology from Rocker was played on the stadium's giant television screen. Rocker was brought in to jeers and chants during the eighth inning and went on to win the game, but his career spiraled downward after that: in quick succession he was traded from Atlanta to Cleveland to Texas. He played only two games for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays at the start of the 2003 season before the team dismissed him. His last comeback was, ironically, in the New York metropolitan area, where he pitched for the Long Island Ducks in 2005, compiling a dismal 6.50 Earned Run Average in twenty-three games.

Critical Overview

Critics have generally viewed *Take Me Out* as a heartfelt work that is clearly knowledgeable about both the game of baseball and what it is to be public about homosexuality in the United States of the twenty-first century; still, most critics have tempered their support for the play by expressing discomfort about Greenberg's two-dimensional handling of characters, particularly Shane, while giving other characters verbal abilities that seem quite unlikely to be found among ballplayers.

Some reviewers had nothing but praise for the play when it ran on Broadway in 2002. For instance, David Kaufman, writing in *Nation*, starts his review with a brief overview of how far theater has come in portraying gay issues onstage since the 1960s, determining that *Take Me Out* □is indeed one of the best gay plays in years,□ noting that □Greenberg seamlessly ties together matters of sex, race, multiculturalism, politics, political correctness, and celebrity.□ Stuart Miller's review in the *Sporting News* was also laudatory, but with reservations. □The plot falters with its climactic contrivances,□ Miller writes, □and the numerous nude shower scenes may turn off some, but the play stirs emotions on issues ranging from friendship to trust to hero worship. Score *Take Me Out* a stand-up double□it doesn't quite hit the ball out of the park, but it provides plenty to cheer about.□

Elysa Gardner, the reviewer for *USA Today*, touches on the reservations that most reviewers had when praising the play. Gardner points out how the move from Off-Broadway to the Walter Kerr Theatre drew attention to the play's weaknesses: □The bright lights and bustling dialogue that dazzled in a smaller setting are now too flashy at times, and at other points reveal flaws in Greenberg's impressive text.□ She also notes the disparity between the verbal acumen of Kippy and Darren in the play, while the foreign players and, especially, Shane Mungitt, are left inarticulate, explaining that □the playwright's cavalier mockery of the others is self-defeating.□ In the end, though, the review characterizes the play as □a winner.□

A few critics did not care for the play, such as Bill Hagerty, who reviewed the London production in 2002 for the *Hollywood Reporter*. His review notes that

Greenberg never loses the audience's attention . . . But if the writer is suggesting that big-time sport and homosexuality mix as happily as salt and sugar, it is a simplistic conclusion. If he is attempting to say more, it still hadn't emerged by the bottom of the ninth.

This review, unique in its weak enthusiasm for the writing, credits the acting and directing but determines in the end, □This baseball saga sports a disappointing batting average.□

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of English literature and composition. In the following essay, he examines why Darren Lemming remains a sympathetic character, despite his behavior in the play.

In his play *Take Me Out*, Richard Greenberg imagines the day, which by all reasonable estimates cannot be long off, when a major league baseball player will publicly announce that he is gay. Of course, like most other persons who have successfully broken down invisible social barriers, Greenberg's fictional center fielder Darren Lemming is an extremely talented player, whose dominance of the game is widely accepted. This removes any question of whether gay players are as capable as straight players. The fact that Lemming is, in fact, a superstar earns him more freedom from his fans than a lesser player would enjoy.

The play illustrates how the world reacts to Lemming's sexual orientation when another player, Shane Mungitt, makes a harsh public reference to having □a *faggot* □ on the team. Not only are those viewing the play left with dropped jaws by the disrespect shown to Lemming, but Greenberg makes it clear from Mungitt's immediate suspension from Major League Baseball that baseball fans in the world of the Greenberg's play side with Lemming. They continue to consider Lemming a hero and will not accept a verbal assault against him. Any ambivalence in how the fans feel about the opening of baseball to gays is mild and contained: one character mentions that Lemming's commercials have been shifted to late-night television, but that is a much more measured reaction than pulling them from the airwaves completely. Nothing is said of riots outside of stadiums, of increased violence against gays, or plummeting ticket sales, all of which conceivably might happen under such circumstances.

Greenberg establishes Lemming's popularity very early in the play, at the same time that he acknowledges the clear contrast between the way homosexuals have been excluded from professional sports and the ways that racial minorities have gained acceptance. Kippy Sunderstrom, the clubhouse intellectual who narrates much of the play's back story, explains within the first few lines that Lemming is the product of a white father and a black mother, noting, □Even in baseball□one of the few realms of American life in which people of color are routinely adulated by people of pallor, he was something special: a black man who had obviously not suffered.□ These few lines set the tone of the play, and of the public's mood, in several ways.

For one thing, this line tells audiences, in case they did not know it, that the color line has been rendered all but irrelevant in the world of professional sports. It holds as true in the world of this play as it does in real life: there may be a few fans here and there who might hold back from supporting a player of a certain race, but expressing such a view would certainly mark one as an oddity among true sports fans.

Another thing the quotation reveals is Darren Lemming's complete dominance of the game of baseball. He is not just □adulated,□ which would be good enough for an

ordinary sports hero, but he is □special□ in addition to that. Lemming is established as being among the best of the best from the script's first page on.

The third and most unstable idea that comes out of Sunderstrom's sentence is the actual reason why Lemming is thought of so kindly by his fans. If this quotation is correct, several assumptions are running through the mind of a fan who accepts Lemming. One is the assumption that most black players have to suffer to reach the major leagues. Another is that audiences have heard so much about black players who have suffered that they find Lemming, with his happy, well-adjusted background, to be a refreshing change. The last is that Darren Lemming has had such a smooth life that the lack of suffering in his background is obvious.

While Lemming's widespread popularity is taken as a given at the beginning of the play, the truly surprising thing is that it holds up until the end, regardless of who he shows himself to be in the intervening time. Darren Lemming is not at all humble. He acts toward both his teammates and his fans as if he deserves every bit of honor given to him, plus more. He is disgusted with fans who have the nerve to offer him compassion after he has been publicly insulted, feeling that compassion brings him down to the level of a common person: they should envy him instead. He rails against people who try to understand him, pouts when his word alone is not enough to have Mungitt thrown out of baseball, and mocks the people who adore him. By all rights, Lemming should wear out his welcome with the theater audience by the time *Take Me Out* is over. When the final curtain falls, however, Greenberg leaves audiences feeling more sympathy for Lemming than for Davey Battle, the character who was killed by a wild pitch, or for Mungitt, the character whose mental and emotional shortcomings lost him his chance to do the one thing that he really understands.

To some extent, empathy for Lemming is the natural outcome of the play, its only proper, satisfactory conclusion. The story starts out with a player who has everything he could want in his professional career but lacks the ability to love freely, so it is reasonable to feel that the play has reached its fulfillment once he finds someone to love. Audiences may have doubts about Lemming's hubris throughout the play, but, like the dramatic convention of bringing up a wedding at the play's end, no matter how contrived or remote, to signify a happy ending, the budding relationship between Lemming and Mason Marzac in the last scene lets everyone leave the theater feeling good.

Greenberg goes further than just providing a happy ending. He also makes it easier to sympathize with Lemming, regardless of how the character might feel about such sympathy, by showing those characters who oppose him to be misguided, foolish, and even evil.

In this play, it is sadness, not anger, that dominates the clubhouse mood after Lemming's orientation is acknowledged. This is best expressed in the letter that the team's manager, William R. Danziger, sends to Lemming soon after Mungitt has humiliated him publicly. Danziger is not at all equivocal about his feelings for Lemming: he expresses his great regard for him as a player and as a man. By saying that he

would wish that if his son were gay he would have a lover like Lemming, Danziger shows that he has no fear of homosexuality. Still, despite his respect, it distresses him that Lemming has introduced homosexuality into baseball. Danziger is a man who loves the game, and he regrets seeing things change. He does not speak with anger, but he clearly is not happy with this turn of events. His attitude seems to be like that of most baseball fans in the world of Greenberg's play: disappointment and acceptance.

Of course, the central relationship in the play is the one between Darren Lemming and Shane Mungitt. Mungitt is uneducated and was traumatized as a child; he has ended up the diametric opposite of Lemming. He is racist and homophobic, airing his anxieties in public. In the end he kills a man, probably intentionally. He is not a sympathetic character, but, once the story of his parents' murder/suicide is explained, it is also difficult to blame him for his ignorance. Greenberg does not make Mungitt an evil character, just one who is unable to behave well. He may be a victim of circumstances, but he is so lacking in the attributes that make Lemming admirable that his collapse is not even a moral issue.

The character who represents evil in the play is Davey Battle. Like Lemming, he is a star player, and he is Lemming's best friend, a fact that is told to the audience several times. Battle has all of the attributes that should make him sympathetic, but in the play's climax, he turns out to be missing what might be the most important element of all: empathy for Darren Lemming. He finds that he cannot tolerate the fact that Lemming is gay, which leads to an argument that Mungitt overhears, which results in Battle's death. Audiences can register how sad it is that a man has been killed over a simple misunderstanding, but in the play's larger moral sense, Battle's death is not a misunderstanding at all: his opposition to Lemming earns him his just reward. As a character, Davey Battle loses audience support because of his own intolerance, which turns out to be a more serious, punishable offense than Mungitt's ignorance or even Lemming's rage against Mungitt.

The main character of *Take Me Out* does not behave admirably. He is proud and arrogant to such an extent that he preys on the weak-minded Mungitt's fear of male intimacy, and he turns against fans and teammates who want to sympathize with him. Still, he is a sympathetic, even sweet character in the final scene. The play is crafted to keep audiences connected to Lemming, to take them as far as they can go with a fictional character whose behavior would probably be found unacceptable in real life.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *Take Me Out*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Adaptations

Take Me Out premiered on June 21, 2002, at the Donmar Warehouse, London, produced by Donmar Warehouse, directed by Joe Montello.

The play opened in New York at the Public Theater in New York City, produced by the Donmar Warehouse and the Public Theater. It moved to the Walter Kerr Theatre on Broadway on February 27, 2003.

Topics for Further Study

Do some research on Jackie Robinson, who became the first black player in Major League Baseball in 1947. Make a list of the personal qualities that Robinson had that made him able to break baseball's color barrier. Then write a letter to Darren Lemming, the pitcher in *Take Me Out*, explaining how you think he should speak to the public about his sexual orientation.

Take Me Out achieved some notoriety for the scenes that call for male nudity onstage. Divide into teams to debate whether nudity onstage is appropriate and whether male nudity should be handled differently than female nudity. Teams should use examples from previous Broadway productions to support their positions.

Baseball players have long been known for their close sense of camaraderie. Watch the 1973 movie *Bang the Drum Slowly*, based on a famous baseball play by Mark Harris, and make a chart of the similarities that you see between the relationship between Wiggen and Pearson in the movie and Darren and Kippy in *Take Me Out*.

As of 2006, laws existed that made homosexual behavior a crime in some places in the United States. Research some of these laws, and write an opinion that explains either why these laws should be allowed to continue or why they should be overturned.

Every four years brings the International Gay Games, a competition that parallels the International Olympics. Make a chart of which athletic records have been broken at the Gay Games then research one of the record-breaking athletes, and explain how her or his life has or has not changed as a result of holding a world record in a non-mainstream competition.

Read *The Boys in the Band*, a 1968 play that was the first big Broadway hit focused on the lives of gay men. Write a short story which shows how you think Darren Lemming would react if he somehow wandered into the long-ago world of that play.

What Do I Read Next?

The Changing Room, by British novelist and playwright David Storey, won the New York Critics' Best Play of the Year Award for 1972. The play, drawn from Storey's own experiences, takes place in the clubhouse of a rugby team. It examines the competitive nature of sports and the camaraderie that exists among teammates and was a precursor to *Take Me Out* in its use of onstage male nudity. First published in 1971 by Jonathan Cape, it is available in *David Storey Plays: The Changing Room / Cromwell / Life Class*, published by Methuen in 1996.

Peter Lefcourt's *The Dreyfus Affair* (1992) is an amusing novel about a very successful second baseman whose life starts unraveling when he finds that he is falling in love with the team's shortstop. When the men are caught kissing, they are banned from baseball for life.

Glenn Burke was an African American center fielder, credited with being the player to invent the high five. He was also the first player in Major League Baseball history to go public about being a homosexual, a few years after his retirement. His autobiography, *Out at Home: The Glenn Burke Story* (1995), was published posthumously by Excel Publishing. It details the difficulties that Burke faced with drug addiction, a stint in San Quentin, and living with the AIDS virus, which eventually killed him.

When a revival of Greenberg's 1997 *Three Days of Rain* opened in 2006, media attention focused on actress Julia Roberts, who was making her Broadway debut. But the play illustrates Greenberg's versatility, centering on three characters in the 1990s who cope with their own lives and the resurgence of their father's cryptic journal: in act 2, the same actors play their parents, in the 1960s. The play is available from Grove Press, in a 1999 edition that also includes Greenberg's *The American Plan*, *The Author's Voice*, and *Hurrah at Last*.

Further Study

Anderson, Eric, *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*, State University of New York Press, 2005.

Anderson interviewed gay athletes at all levels of team play, from high school sports to professional teams, in order to document the prevailing attitudes toward homosexuality and how it fits with or clashes with the macho culture of competition.

Morgan, William J., □Baseball and the Search for an American Moral Identity,□ in *Baseball and Philosophy: Thinking Outside the Batter's Box*, edited by Eric Bronson, Open Court Publishing, 2004, pp. 157-68.

In *Take Me Out*, the character Mason Marzac learns to appreciate baseball from an intellectual standpoint, while other characters, particularly Kippy and Darren, discuss the moral issues surrounding the game. In this essay, Morgan examines what the game has to say about the American character.

Robinson, Jackie, *I Never Had It Made*, Harper Perennial, 1972.

This autobiography of the first African American in Major League Baseball recalls the struggles and taunts that Robinson had to endure as a trailblazer, foreshadowing the situations that the first openly gay player might face.

Woog, Daniel, *Jocks: True Stories of America's Gay Athletes*, Alyson Publications, 1998.

Woog, a soccer coach, provides profiles of over two dozen openly gay athletes and coaches, exploring how they deal with the public perception of them. This book is less scholarly, more anecdotal, than Anderson's *In the Game*.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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