The Teahouse of the August Moon Study Guide

The Teahouse of the August Moon by John Patrick

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

The Teahouse of the August Moon (1953), by John Patrick, is a comedy about the process of the Americanization of Japanese citizens on the island of Okinawa during the American Occupation of Japan following World War II. A hit Broadway production, Patrick's play won many awards, including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play of the Year, the Pulitzer Prize in drama, and the Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award. Although extremely popular in the 1950s, this play became outdated by the 1970s when increased awareness of racial issues led audiences to recognize the offensive stereotypes of Asian people in the play.

A young military officer, Captain Fisby, is assigned to carry out "Plan B" in a tiny Okmawan village, to begin the process of Americanization by instituting a local democratic government, establishing a capitalist economy, and building a school-house in which the village children will be taught English. Fisby is assigned a local interpreter, SaMni, who attempts to explain to him many of the local customs. Fisby, however, is frustrated when the villagers are unable to market their local products, such as cncket cages and lacquered bowels.

When Fisby appoints a local democratic government, they vote to build a teahouse with the materials intended for the schoolhouse. With the help of Lotus Blossom, a young geisha, Fisby quickly becomes accommodated to the local culture and agrees to the building of the teahouse. In the meantime, he successfully markets a locally made brandy to the surrounding military bases.

When his commanding officer, Colonel Purdy, arrives, Fisby is caught in his bathrobe, a makeshift kimono, in the midst of a tea ceremony and is reprimanded for misusing military resources and for the selling of alcohol. Purdy orders the teahouse lorn down and the distilleries destroyed but the local villagers are clever and only pretend to carry out these orders while secretly preserving both. This proves fortunate, as Purdy learns that the village is to be presented as an example of successful democratization by Occupation Forces.

Teahouse of the August Moon concerns the clash of cultures that results from the American Occupation of Japan. Much of the comedy derives from the inability of American military personnel to understand local culture and tradition.

Author Biography

John Patrick Goggan was bom on May 17, 1905, in Louisville. Kentucky, the son of John Francis and Myrtle (Osborn) Goggan. Abandoned by both of them, Patrick spent his childhood in a variety of foster homes and boarding schools, including St. Edward's School in Austin, Texas, and Holy Cross School, in New Orleans.

A drifter during much of his teen years, Patrick landed a job as radio announcer for KPO Radio in San Francisco, California, at the age of nineteen. Changing his name to John Patrick, he wrote over eleven hundred radio screenplays for the "Cecil and Sally" show, which was eventually broadcast by NBC between the years of 1929 and 1933. From 1933 to 1936. he continued to write for NBC, and in 1940. Helen Hayes performed his adaptations of the classics, also on NBC.

Patrick served during World War II as an ambulance driver in the American Field Service from 1941 to 1944, es'entually achieving the rank of captain. Although he never earned a formal degree, Patrick attended courses at Harvard University and Colombia University.

His first successful stage play. *The Hasty Heart*, was produced off-Broadway in 1945. After two unsuccessful plays, Patrick's greatest success. *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1953), earned both audience popularity and extensive critical acclaim, including the New York Drama Critics Circle award and the Antoinette Perry (Tony) award. Between 1936 and 1968. Patrick wrote numerous screenplays for popular Hollywood film productions. Some of his most successful screenwriting credits include: *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* (1955), *Les Girls* (1957), the Academy Award-winning *Some Came Running* (1958), *Gigot* (1962), and *The Main Attraction* (1963).

Later in life, Patrick lived in the Virgin Islands, and on November 7, 1995. at the age of ninety, he died of an apparent suicide, in Delray Beach. Florida.

Plot Summary

Act I

Act 1, scene 1 of *The Teahouse of the Moon* takes place at an American military base on the Japanese island of Okinawa during the American Occupation of Japan in the aftermath of World War II. Sakini, a local Okinawan interpreter for the American military, speaks directly to the audience, introducing the setting and historical circumstances of the play in which Colonel Purdy is in charge of instituting the Americanization of the local culture.

Captain Fisby, a young officer, arrives at the base and is assigned to the tiny village of Tobiki to carry out "Plan B," which includes the institution of a local democratic government, the establishment of a capitalist economy, and the building of a schoolhouse. In scene 2, Fisby is delayed in his departure for Tobiki when an entire clan of local people, including a grandmother, daughter, grandchildren, and family goat, among others, crowd onto the jeep with their belongings, expecting a ride to the village. Against the officers' protests, they remain on the jeep for the duration of thejourney. In scene HI, Captain Pisby is set up in his office in Tobiki, along with Sakmi as interpreter. The local villagers crowd around to present Fisby with gifts. He gets the villagers to appoint department heads for the setting up of a local democratic government. A Mr. Sumata presents Fisby with the gift of his daughter, Lotus Blossom, who is a geisha.

Act 2

Act 2, scene 1 takes place in Tobiki, a few days later. Fisby, mistaking Lotus Blossom for a prostitute, disapproves of her popularity among the local men and her influence among the local women. Sakmi, however, explains to him that she is a geisha, a woman who plays a traditional role in Japanese culture that includes the serving of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

The newly appointed local government has used the democratic process to vote for the building of a local teahouse in which Lotus Blossom can serve the local men After fruitless protest, Fisby agrees to allow the materials intended for the building of the schoolhouse to be used to build a teahouse instead. Scene 2 takes place a few weeks later when Purdy calls Fisby to get a progress report on the implementation of "Plan B" in the village. Scene 3 takes place in Fisby's office, a few days later. Purdy, suspecting something amiss with Fisby's behavior, has sent an army psychiatrist, Captain McLean, to examine Fisby. Fisby, by this point, has almost completely accommodated himself to the local culture with much help from Lotus Blossom. He wears his bathrobe, a makeshift kimono, wears the local footwear, and munches on local snack foods. McLean, however, is quickly enticed into overseeing the planting of crops for the village horticulture being a personal passion of his. When Colonel Purdy calls to get a report on

Fisby from McLean, McLean requests to spend more time in the village, supposedly to evaluate Fisby.

In scene 4, the villagers have returned from a nearby market where they failed to sell their local products, such as cricket cages and lacquered dish-ware. Fisby, however, learns of a local recipe for sweet-potato brandy, which he decides to market to the nearby military bases. He arranges for the mass production of the brandy by the villagers and immediately sells a large order at a great profit.

Act 3

Act 3, scene 1 takes place at the newly built teahouse, several weeks later. Fisby is presented with a birthday gift A wrestling match is held in the teahouse, as entertainment. As Fisby and McLean are leading the villagers in singing "Deep in the Heart of Texas," Colonel Purdy arrives unexpectedly. McLean and Fisby are immediately chastised for misusing the building materials intended for the schoolhouse and for marketing the liquor. Purdy orders that the teahouse be torn down and the brandy distilleries destroyed. Sakim, however, informs Fisby that the villagers have cleverly moved and hidden both the teahouse and the distilleries, only giving the impression of having destroyed them. Colonel Purdy then receives word that the village is to he presented as an example of successful democratization and instructs Fisby to restore the teahouse and distilleries.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The Teahouse of the August Moon is John Patrick's three-act play about American military efforts to introduce democracy and American culture to the Japanese people living on the island of Okinawa during the American Occupation of Japan, following World War II.

The stage is set with four bamboo panels, which raise and lower to reveal different scenes throughout the play. As the first scene begins, the strains of Oriental music are heard being played on a stringed instrument. A Japanese man, named Sakini, who is dressed in a combination of island clothes and American military accessories, comes to the front of the stage to address the audience.

Sakini describes the occupation of the American military forces on the island of Okinawa and hopes that it will be different from all the other times the island has been invaded by other countries. Sakini admits that being invaded is a good way to learn the cultures of other peoples, without ever having to leave your own home.

Sakini's function is to act as an interpreter between the American military personnel and the Okinawa residents. Sakini motions for one of the bamboo panels to be raised, and the office of Colonel Wainright Purdy is revealed. Sakini works closely with the Colonel and reveals that the officer is very organized and very clean. These are uncommon traits in this poor country and will be of great benefit one day.

Inside the Colonel's office is Sergeant Gregovich, the Colonel's assistant, who spends most of his time reading copies of the Colonel's *Adventure* magazine. Colonel Purdy enters the scene and realizes that the laundry hanging on the line is lacking one pair of pants. The Colonel yells at Sakini to take care of the issue and does not understand why people in this country are either sleeping or stealing. Sakini wryly replies that the people's "get-up-and-go" went away.

Colonel Purdy is expecting a new officer, Captain Fisby, to help with the Americanization effort and sends Sakini in search of the new man. Purdy tells Gregovich that Fisby has been transferred to Purdy's command from the Psychological Warfare unit. Purdy feels honored to have someone from such an elite group coming to his unit.

Gregovich leaves to have more signs painted for Purdy's new requests. Before long, Fisby arrives to report for duty. It is revealed that Fisby has not so much requested a transfer to Purdy's unit, but has been moved, because he seems to fail at every other job or unit in which he is placed. Purdy's command is almost the end of the line for the bumbling Fisby.

Purdy presents Fisby with the government's Plan B document, which is the size of a big city phone book. He tells the newcomer that he is responsible for Americanizing the

village of Tobiki, implementing the steps in the plan. Part of Fisby's mission is the building of a pentagon-shaped schoolhouse and the establishment of a chapter of the Ladies' League for Democratic Action to whom the Captain will deliver lectures on the benefits of a democratic society.

Purdy reminds Fisby that the eye of the government is on the success of the democratization of Tobiki. He sends the Captain away with Sakini as his new aide.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

It is important to understand the period in history of post World War II to grasp the meaning of Patrick's play. With the Japanese participation in the war against the United States and its allies, suspicions were high concerning people of Japanese descent living in the United States during the duration of the war and long afterwards. These people were herded into Internment Camps within the United States to minimize any national threat. They were kept there until long after the war ended in 1945.

This prejudice toward Asian people still existed in 1952 when this play was written. Many of the jokes and references to the Japanese people are hostile and derogatory. This insensitivity toward a major cultural influence and world power would never be tolerated today, but the historical context makes the author's writing understandable for the time.

As part of the peace agreement ending World War II, Japan had to submit to occupation by the United States and other Allied Forces countries until 1952, which is the basis for the plot line of the play.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

A few minutes later, Fisby meets Sakini outside the Captain's quarters, as they prepare for the ride to Tobiki. Fisby soon realizes that this will be no simple trip down a mountain, as Sakini has agreed to let other people of the area ride along to visit relatives in Tobiki they have not seen for a long time.

Eventually, Captain Fisby's jeep is filled with an old woman, her daughter, three grandchildren, an old man, a goat, and various bundles of clothes and pots. Fisby tries to rid himself of these extra burdens, but Sakini's good humor prevails, and the Captain accepts his fate.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The author introduces the reader to Japanese culture at the same time that Captain Fisby gets his first lesson. Typical, military style warrants that Fisby begin his trip immediately, based on Colonel Purdy's orders; but the word of Fisby's trip to Tobiki travels fast. The old woman is the grandmother of the mayor of Tobiki, so to deny her a ride to see him would be a dishonor to the mayor. This would not bode well for Fisby's mission to democratize the village. The woman must ride along with the old woman, because there is no one else to care for her along the way, and the woman cannot leave her own three children. There is a reverence for the aged in the Japanese culture, as well as a high sense of nobility and honor. What seems like a comical sketch is really an immersion into Japanese culture for the unsuspecting Captain Fisby.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Captain Fisby does not arrive in Tobiki until ten days later, as his passengers have requested side trips to visit relatives along the way. Sakini addresses the audience with some details of the trip and motions for the bamboo panels to to raise and reveal the impoverished village of Tobiki.

Fisby calls for Sakini, because Plan B indicates that the Captain must hold a public meeting. Fortunately, the people have already gathered, and Sakini translates as Fisby begins to share the plans for what America will do for the village. Sakini interrupts Fisby by telling the Captain that it is bad manners to make the villagers feel poor, and that the Captain must accept the gifts offered by the local people.

Among the gifts offered up are chopsticks, wooden sandals, lacquer bowls and two cricket houses. Crickets are symbols of good luck in Japan, but the owner of the cricket house must find his own cricket, because no one else can bring fortune to a man. It's a concept that amuses Fisby.

The Captain makes a good first impression on the villagers with his gracious acceptance of their gifts. Fisby also sees the opportunity to generate revenue for the town through the production of some of the gift items and selling them to the U.S. military personnel in other areas. The townspeople are encouraged by the prospect of some industry and agree to begin handcrafting their articles immediately.

The next order of business in the democratization process is to establish men for the Chief of Police and Chief of Agriculture positions. The women also elect a woman named Higa Jiga to be the president of the Ladies' League for Democratic Action. With all this business accomplished, the villagers leave so that they may engage in their nightly ritual of drinking tea and watching the sunset in a local pine grove.

Fisby and Sakini retire to the Captain's quarters, and Sakini informs Fisby that a man named Mr. Sumatra has left a gift for Fisby. Fisby is weary of the gift scenario and asks Sakini to place this one on a shelf with the others. He's shocked to find that the gift is a geisha named Lotus Blossom.

Lotus Blossom is anxious to begin ministering to her new master, Captain Fisby, but the Captain is uncomfortable with the geisha's attentions and attempts to clothe him in a kimono.

Colonel Purdy calls Fisby and orders a status report completed in two weeks, as Fisby awkwardly resists Lotus Blossom's attentions.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

The significance of the play's title is partially revealed in this scene, when Fisby receives a beautiful lacquer cup from one of the villagers, named Oshira. Upon presenting the gift, Oshira adds the wish that August moon fill the cup, telling Fisby "All moons good, but August moon little older, little wiser."

The dialogue is interesting in that the author inserts native Luchuan dialect spoken by the Tobiki villagers, and the meaning is not understood without Sakini's interpretation.

The difference in the cultures becomes more evident in this scene, as the villagers are proud of the painstakingly handcrafted items they have produced, while Fisby sees the opportunity for mass production and profit. The latter is is the American industrial way of thinking.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

The scene begins with Sakini addressing the audience once more. He talks about the sun being the most traveled person in the universe, because it visits each person all over the world every day. Sakini continues by stating that Tobiki is becoming a place of industry and democracy, as well as the new home of a geisha girl.

Fisby enters and asks Sakini where the Chief of Agriculture and the Chief of Police have gone. Sakini tells the Captain that the men are moving Lotus Blossom's personal things to the village. Fisby is perturbed at the intrusion to his operations, and Sakini misinterprets his aggravation as jealousy that the other men are spending time with Lotus Blossom.

Fisby confirms to Sakini that he has no interest in Lotus Blossom and does not approve of the concept of a geisha. Higa Jiga arrives at Fisby's office to complain of discrimination, because Lotus Blossom takes precedence over all the village women at the shops.

Fisby tries to have Lotus Blossom transferred to another military unit. After some phone calls, he realizes that the geisha has been to all of them and removed for creating disruptions. Resigned to his fate of keeping the geisha, Fisby is required to provide cosmetics and hair accessories for Higa Jiga and all the other women villagers, so that there is democracy in what is equally provided to all them. Higa Jiga also demands that Lotus Blossom teach all the village women to become geishas.

Lotus Blossom returns to Fisby's office and begins to tend to his needs, despite his protests. Sakini tries to tell Fisby that a geisha girl is not a prostitute, rather a businesswoman trained to provide services of comfort. Any denial of Lotus Blossom to perform her duties will be a great dishonor to her and her profession.

The men of the village have voted democratically and decided that they prefer that Fisby build a teahouse for them, instead of the planned schoolhouse. Fisby does not have the appropriate materials or the authority to revise Plan B directives and informs Sakini to tell the men that he cannot accommodate their wishes.

The men are disheartened, because the teahouse would have been their only way to gain any notoriety in the area. Most of the people are very poor and will never be able to travel to see a teahouse in a big city. This would have been their chance to have one in their midst. In addition, a teahouse would make them proud, and let people know that their village is a fine one.

Ultimately, Captain Fisby relents and consents to the building of a teahouse, using the materials intended for the schoolhouse.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

In a twist of irony, the democratic process that Fisby has been touting has been used against him. The village vote overrules the building of a schoolhouse in favor of a teahouse. The strategies in the government's Plan B do not allow for the use of democracy by those upon whom it is being forced, and the villagers have outwitted the napve Captain Fisby.

One of the author's techniques is the use of humor, particularly with Sakini, who becomes the voice of wisdom, as well as a wry wit, with some of his comments and observations. In one instance, Fisby is angry that his department heads have left the office to help move the beautiful Lotus Blossom to the village; and Fisby finds out that one of the oldest men of the village, Mr. Oshira, has also gone and is incredulous at the old man's activities. Sakini tells Fisby, "He's old, boss, but not dead."

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

One of the bamboo panels on the stage lifts to reveal Colonel Purdy in his office, where he reads a lackluster report from Captain Fisby. Purdy places a phone call to Fisby, who is wearing a bathrobe meant to serve as a kimono. Fisby is clearly distracted and flustered by Purdy's questions about his progress in Tobiki. Fisby's replies indicate no progress on the schoolhouse and no democratic lectures delivered to the Ladies' League.

Fisby reports the production of the cottage industries of cricket cages and lacquer bowls. Purdy surmises that Fisby has had a nervous breakdown. He summons a military psychiatrist named, Captain McLean, to Tobiki.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

By this time, Fisby is fully immersed into the village lifestyle by wearing his bathrobe and drinking tea at sunset with the townspeople. The process of democratization has broken down, and Purdy sees his chances of becoming a general beginning to fade.

The author uses this scene as the build-up to the play's climax, when the Colonel's mission will collide with Captain Fisby's newfound lifestyle.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

A few days later, Captain McLean enters Fisby's empty office and shuffles through some of the effects; including, a cricket cage. McLean is making notes, as Fisby enters wearing his bathrobe, wooden sandals, and a big straw hat. Fisby introduces himself, and McLean tells Fisby that he is on assignment to make some ethnological studies of native life.

McLean is shocked to hear Fisby discuss his own geisha girl and the building of a teahouse with U.S. government materials. Fisby continues to tell McLean about the beauty and grace of the Japanese people and their industriousness of handcrafting items, which they have just recently taken to military areas to sell as souvenirs.

Fisby reveals that after the completion of the teahouse, his next plan will be the introduction of chemicals into the agricultural system, a fact that outrages the botany-obsessed McLean, who feels that organic gardening is the only authentic method. Fisby capitalizes on McLean's knowledge and interest and asks McLean to stay to help improve the agricultural efforts in the area.

When Fisby leaves the office to check on the progress of the lotus pond near the teahouse, McLean answers a phone call from Colonel Purdy. He tells the Colonel that he needs to stay several weeks in order to make the best assessment of the situation. McLean is distracted by the new opportunity to employ some of his botany knowledge and distractedly asks Purdy to send some seed catalogs.

The scene ends as Purdy asks Gregovich for a copy of Plan B, so that he knows who to send to analyze an analyst.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

The author continues to utilize the technique of humor, and this scene employs physical comedy as opposed to Sakini's dry wit. The contrast of the impeccably dressed Captain McLean and Captain Fisby in his makeshift kimono is visually amusing. However, it is McLean's rapture over his newfound opportunity to employ his love for gardening that creates the more humorous scene. The idea that this professional man, in the business of analyzing things, is so easily swept away by the thought of botany is both ironic and funny.

When McLean talks to Colonel Purdy on the phone, it is evident that McLean is not paying attention, causing him to ask the Colonel to send seed catalogs and soil test kits. This is is obviously out of character and humorous. The Colonel has a witty statement at the end when he demands, "I want to see who I send to analyze an analyst." This is a humorous play on words, and an end to a physically humorous scene.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

A few weeks later, the villagers have returned to Tobiki disheartened, because their handcrafted items did not sell at the military bases. Sakini translates for Fisby and tells the Captain that the soldiers and sailors are not interested in the items, because they can purchase mass-produced items for less cost.

This dip in the economic plan for the village is only temporary, as Fisby picks up on the statement that the villagers intend to go home and get drunk on the brandy they make from the surplus of sweet potatoes they grow. Fisby knows that military personnel always want liquor and sends for a sample of the brandy, which is tried out first on a goat to determine that it is not harmful.

Fisby and McLean then taste the brandy, declaring it fit for military consumption. They create the Cooperative Brewing Company of Tobiki. Fisby makes phone calls to local Officers Clubs and supply masters and sells as many gallons of the sweet potato brandy as the villagers can produce.

Sakini informs the villagers of the plan, and the imminent wealth which is about to be bestowed upon them. Fisby urges the men to get to work on the brandy. Then, he stoops to pick up his first cricket, and the villagers cheer.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

The foreshadowing of the bestowal of the cricket houses on Fisby upon his arrival in Tobiki has come true with his finding a cricket. The cricket is symbolic of the good fortune about to arrive for the village in the form of sweet potato brandy sales. The villagers are thrilled at the omen.

The scenario of the military personnel rejecting the handcrafted items of value over the mass-produced items available cheap plus their immediate purchase of the brandy is not a very positive commentary on American values. There is also redemption in an alternate side. Fisby's character, which capitalizes on the opportunities to help the villagers, will improve their economy and lifestyle, which is a very positive quality and purpose.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

A few weeks have passed, and Sakini, once again, addresses the audience in front of the bamboo panels. He tells of the prosperity that has visited Tobiki, because of the sale of the sweet potato brandy. The village is now dotted with lovely homes, the most beautiful being the Teahouse of the August Moon. The bamboo panels rise to reveal the teahouse with paper lights hanging from the rafters. A beautiful August moon hangs in the sky, as Lotus Blossom is seen greeting guests.

All the men, including Sakini, are dressed in white suits. The women wear beautiful silk kimonos. As the teahouse rituals progress, Fisby and McLean arrive, and Lotus Blossom tries to tell Fisby "Happy Birthday." Sakini has coached her, but all she can say is "Hoppee Hoppee." Fisby is touched by the gesture and sits, as Lotus Blossom dances for him. After Lotus Blossom finishes, Sakini instructs Fisby that he is to be the referee in a wrestling match between the Chief of Agriculture and the Chief of Police, the winner of which will be able to carry sweet potatoes for Lotus Blossom.

After the wrestling match, Fisby and McLean are asked to sing. They begin a rousing chorus of "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and tell Sakini to have the villagers repeat what they sing, as if in a round. Unbeknownst to the two Captains, Colonel Purdy enters the teahouse and observes his officers singing in their kimonos. Purdy eventually yells loud enough that his voice is heard over the group's singing, and Fisby cowers in shock, as McLean and the villagers run away.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

This scene is the climax of the play, when the villagers celebrate their success and prosperity at the same time that Colonel Purdy decides to visit to determine the status of Fisby's progress. The climax is the point at which the plot line reaches a dramatic peak, followed by some resulting action that will alter the course of the story in some way. It is not difficult to guess what will happen next, due to Colonel Purdy's outraged character style and Fisby's history of acquiescing to authority.

Symbolically, the full August moon, which Sakini has informed the reader to mean a moon that is "a little older, a little wiser," appears to represent the wisdom garnered by Fisby and the people of Tobiki who have blended the best of both their cultures to create the perfect solution for peace and prosperity. Both will be ensured by the endurance of the brandy sales, and the commerce created by the teahouse business.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

The next morning, Sakini appears before the bamboo shades to inform the audience that the fate of Tobiki is not good. However, the Japanese people have withstood hardships for many years, in spite of invasions by other countries. Sakini wryly states that the country can certainly withstand the invasion of Colonel Purdy.

The panels rise to reveal Captain Fisby's office, where Colonel Purdy rifles through papers, as Fisby and McLean stand cowering nearby. It is evident that Fisby has not completed any progress reports or delivered any of his lectures on the benefits of democracy. Purdy dismisses the timid McLean and sends him back to his unit.

Purdy turns his attentions once more to Fisby, who admits that the schoolhouse was never started. In fact, the intended materials were appropriated to the building of the teahouse. Purdy accuses Fisby of building a house of prostitution where Lotus Blossom can ply her trade. However, Fisby tries in vain to instruct Purdy on the meaning of a geisha.

Purdy informs Fisby that the government has been aware of the amount of revenue streaming into Tobiki and demands to know the source.

As Fisby tries to explain, Purdy answers the phone and hears an order for brandy. Now, he understands the nature of Fisby's enterprise. Purdy does not approve of the encouragement of lewdness and alcohol abuse in order to promote the village's economic progress. He orders the sweet potato stills and the teahouse to be destroyed.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

Once again, Sakini is the voice of wisdom and the village wit, as he puts the Colonel's rage in perspective. The author has captured the serenity and wisdom of the Okinawan people through the characteristics of Sakini, as he states, "When present is blackest, future can be only brighter. Okinawa invaded many times. Not sink in ocean yet. Survive Chinese. Survive Japanese. Survive missionaries and Americans. Invaded by typhoon. Invaded by locust. Invaded by cockroach and sweet potato moth. Tobiki now invaded by Honorable Colonel. Not sink in ocean."

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

A few hours have passed, and Sakini is too heartsick by the sound of the destruction going on around him to address the audience. The teahouse is now just a frame, and Lotus Blossom is packing her belongings to be moved back home. Fisby arrives at the site of the teahouse, and Lotus Blossom invites him to an imaginary tea where the pair sits for one last time, pretending that they are enjoying tea together.

Sakini wants to know if Fisby will take Lotus Blossom back to America with him, but Fisby states that she would not be welcomed openly, especially in his hometown. People are ostracized there, if they're different. Still, Lotus Blossom wishes to marry Fisby. However, he cannot encourage her and tells her that he will never forget her. He says that every time he sees an August moon rising from the east, he will remember the wisdom, which enabled him to leave Lotus Blossom where she truly belongs.

Fisby gives Sakini his instructions on his assignment with the next Captain assigned to democratize Tobiki, but Sakini is reticent to follow orders from anyone but Fisby. As Fisby turns to leave, Sakini assures the Captain that he had not been a failure on his mission in Tobiki.

Suddenly, Colonel Purdy enters and demands that Fisby begin to help him immediately. Apparently, some Senator has written up the case of Fisby's success in Tobiki, and some government officials are arriving today to witness the operations firsthand. Unfortunately, the teahouse is dismantled and the stills destroyed, so the Colonel will be perceived as a failure.

Sakini saves the day by telling the Colonel that the sweet potato stills were only hidden and substituted with water stills. The destruction did not touch the prosperous distilling process. The pieces of the teahouse are also hidden, and restoration can begin immediately. The Colonel cannot believe his good fortune, as Sakini explains his ingenuity by living in a country that has endured many invasions and has mastered the art of hiding valuable things.

As the scene ends, Fisby invites Purdy to a cup of tea in the teahouse, and Sakini imparts his last bits of wisdom by saying, "Thought makes man wise. Wisdom makes life endurable. Our play has ended. May August moon bring gentle sleep."

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

In the ultimate irony, the people, who were supposed to be subservient, have ended up providing the final lesson in this story. The villagers were considered lazy and uneducated by the Colonel at the beginning of the play, and now it is they who have

surpassed any education efforts the Colonel could have provided and taught him a lesson about ingenuity and the skills to survive.

The significance of the play's title surfaces once more, with Sakini's wish for the audience that an August moon should bring gentle sleep. It is the sage Sakini, who understands that there all types of knowledge but the most authentic type stems from wisdom of experience, nobility, gratitude and survival.

Characters

Captain Fisby

Captain Fisby is the young officer assigned to implement "Plan B" in the Americanization process of the tiny Okmawan village of Tobiki. Fisby is described as, "in his late twenties, nice-looking and rather on the earnest side," and is "nervous and eager to make a good impression" on his senior officer. From his office in Tobiki, Fisby is assigned to establish a local democratic government, institute a capitalist economy, and build a schoolhouse. He is at first frustrated in all of these efforts Instead, he soon agrees to the building of a local teahouse and successfully markets the locally made sweet potato brandy to the nearby military bases. In the process, he quickly becomes accommodated to the local culture, wearing his bathrobe as a makeshift kimono and munching on the local snack foods. His senior officer, Purdy, arrives at the newly built teahouse just as Fisby, in his bathrobe, is leading the locals in a celebratory song. Purdy reprimands him for misusing army materials to build the teahouse and for marketing alcohol However, Purdy then learns that the village is to be presented as an example of successful democratization by Occupation Forces.

Lotus Blossom

Lotus Blossom, a young geisha, is given to Fisby by her father, Mr. Sumata She is described as "a petite and lovely geisha girl in traditional costume." Fisby at first mistakes her for a prostitute and disapproves of her, until Sakini explains that a geisha serves a traditional role in Japanese culture much different from that of a prostitute in Western culture Her presence in the village inspires the other women to want to become geishas, and the men to want a teahouse in which she can serve them. Before Fisby leaves, at the end of the play, Lotus Blossom asks his approval to marry a local man. Although the geisha is a real figure in Japanese culture and history, the character of Lotus Blossom represents one of the most common, and most offensive, stereotypes of Asian women found in Western culture.

Captain McLean

Captain McLean is the army psychiatrist sent by Colonel Purdy to secretly evaluate Fisby. He is described as "an intense, rather wild-eyed man in his middle forties." Once in Tobiki, however, McLean, who harbors a passion for horticulture, is quickly inspired to head the planting of crops in the village By the time the teahouse is built, McLean, like Fisby, has accommodated himself to the local dress and customs. When Purdy arrives unexpectedly at the teahouse, McLean and Fisby lead the local villagers in singing "Deep in the Heart of Texas." McLean is reprimanded by Purdy and sent away

Colonel Wainwright Purdy

Colonel Wainwright Purdy is in charge of the military base in which act 1 is set. He is described as "a man of proportions," on whose shoulders "the worries of the world in general and the Army of Occupation in particular weigh heavily." Purdy assigns Fisby to carry out "Plan B" in the remote village of Tobiki. He also assigns Sakini to accompany Fisby as his interpreter. Purdy occasionally calls Fisby's office in Tobiki to get a progress report and quickly becomes suspicious of Fisby's inexplicable answers to his questions. He sends an army psychiatrist, Captain McLean, to secretly evaluate Fisby. When he suspects the marketing of brandy from Tobiki to local military bases, Purdy goes there to find out what Fisby is up to. He walks into the newly built teahouse just as Fisby and MacLean, dressed in their bathrobes, are leading the local villagers in a celebratory song. Purdy reprimands both of the officers and orders that the teahouse be torn down and the brandy distilleries destroyed. He is secretly foiled, however, by the villagers, who cleverly hide both the teahouse and the distilleries, only pretending to have destroyed them. This proves beneficial to Purdy when he learns that the village is to be presented as an example of successful democratization by Occupation Forces.

Sakini

Sakini is the Okinawan interpreter for the American military. Sakini serves as a sort of narrator of the play, periodically addressing the audience directly, explaining the historical and cultural circumstances of the setting. In the stage directions, his costume and looks are described in great detail: "He wears a pair of tattered shorts and a native shirt. His shoes, the gift of a G.I., are several sizes too large. His socks are also too large and hang in wrinkles over his ankles. He is an Okinawan who might be any age between thirty and sixty In repose his face betrays age, but the illusion is shattered quickly by his smile of childlike candor." The character of SaMni represents a common stereotype of Asians, in fact of all non-Western peoples, in Western culture1 he is described as "childlike," although he is anywhere from thirty to sixty years old. His character is represented as clever but simpleminded, another common stereotype.

Themes

Democratization

This play is set during the Allied Occupation of Japan following World War n. During that period, from 1945 to 1952, the United States instituted a policy of democratization, according to which the military was to oversee the establishment of some form of democratic or representational government. In the play, Captain Fisby is sent to the tiny village of Tobiki, on Okinawa Island, to carry out the process of democratization In his opening monologue, the character of SaMni, an Okinawan interpreter for the U S. military, explains, "We tell little story to demonstrate splendid example of benevolent assimilation of democracy by Okinawa." Colonel Purdy explains to Fisby that "my job is to teach these natives the meaning of democracy, and they're going to learn democracy if I have to shoot every one of them."

Among other things, Purdy instructs Fisby that "your first job when you get there will be to establish a municipal government." Purdy also instructs Pisby to "organize a Ladies' League for Democratic Action." Upon arrival in Tobiki, Fisby informs SaMni that "Plan B," which provides instructions for the process of democratization, "calls for a lecture on the ABC's of democracy," He asks SaMni to explain to the villagers "that we intend to lift the yoke of oppression from their shoulders " When asked by the villagers to explain democracy, Fisby stammers, "Well, it's a system of self-determination. It's it's the right to make the wrong choice," Fisby then goes about instructing the villagers to appoint a chief of Agriculture and chief of Police. Fisby at first balks at the seemingly irrational basis on which the men for these jobs are chosen, but comments, somewhat ironically that "no one can say this isn't self-determination."

In the second act, Sakini, in addressing the audience, refers to TobiM as a "seat of democracy." But Fisby's efforts to implement "Plan B" seem to go awry when the villagers use the democratic process to vote for "geisha lessons" for all the women and to build a cha ya, or teahouse, for the village. When Fisby attempts to protest, the villagers use the argument that they are exercising democracy in these decisions. SaMni explains to him that the villagers "say they just held meeting in democratic fashion and majority agree on resolution" to build a teahouse. And, when Fisby protests, Sakini reminds him, "But you tell them the will of majority is law " Thus, the villagers accurately take on the values of "serf-determination" represented by democracy although the outcome of this process is much different from that intended by the U.S. military as outlined in "Plan B."

Industry

In addition to democracy, Fisby is assigned to establish industry in TobiM to "make them self-supporting. " Fisby learns of the traditional crafts of Tobiki as the villagers each present him with a gift, including a cricket cage and a fine, handcrafted, lacquered cup.

This detail is in fact culturally accurate, as lacquer ware is indeed one of the traditional crafts of the Okinawa islands. The notion of industry, however, is at odds with the values of a traditional craft. Mr. Oshira, who has made the lacquered cup, explains to Fisby that it is a skill passed on from father to son, a part of his family heritage. Sakini describes the fine detail involved in the maMng of the cup, pointing out that it is "thin as paper, carved from one block of wood. Then painted many times with red lacquer," with a gold fish painted inside. Nonetheless, Fisby suggests that they set up an industry and mass-produce the cups to market as "alostart" Fisby suggests that they "set up machines and turn them out by the gross," but Mr. Oshira explains, "I take pride in making one cup at a time.... How can I take pride in work of machine?"

This exchange demonstrates the process by which industry, and mass-production, as practiced by American capitalism, undermines the value of traditional skills and traditional works of art. Although they follow Fisby's intentions, the villagers fail to market any of their traditional crafts. Fisby then hits on the idea of mass-producing the locally made, traditional sweet-potato brandy to the nearby military bases. He calls the business The Cooperative Brewing Company of Tobiki. This proves an extremely successful industry by which the village of Tobiki prospers.

Style

Setting

The play is set during the American Occupation of Japan in the aftermath of World War n It takes place on the island of Okinawa, the largest of the Okinawa Islands, in the South China Sea. The setting is central to the play, which explores an attempt at democratization of the native Okinawan culture. The main characters are either U S military personnel or inhabitants of the tiny village of Tobiki, a fictional location.

Dialogue

The dialogue in this play represents two common elements of stereotypical depictions of Asian societies. The Okinawans Sakini, for instance speak a broken English that is a stereotypical representation throughout Western culture of the accents of Asian people from any national and linguistic background. This stereotypically broken English may be generally recognizable to many Western readers. For instance, Sakini, the interpreter for the Americans, after removing a piece of chewing gum from his mouth, explains to the audience: "Most generous gift of American sergeant" In explaining to the audience the occupation by American troops, he says- "History of Okinawa reveal distinguished record of conquerors." This common stereotype is generally considered offensive by many Asians and Asian Americans.

The language of the Okinawans, as represented in the play, is another example of stereotypical representations of non-Western cultures A footnote explains that "the Luchuan dialect used throughout the play is merely a phonetic approximation." The inaccurate representation of a native language through essentially made-up nonsense words, as in this case, is often considered offensive to the culture being represented. Hence, the dialogue of Okinawans in this play represents two different ways of stereotyping the language and speech of Asian people.

Costumes

The costuming is important as an indication of the ways in which the two cultures, Japanese and American, confront and influence one another. Sakmi's outfit is a strong examples of this. As an interpreter for the American troops, SaMni, more than any other character in the play, moves easily between the two cultures While Okinawan, he has adopted a number of habits from the American military personnel, and his outfit shows the result of this hybridizing of the two cultures. He wears "a native shirt" combined with a makeshift outfit of American civilian and military attire. He wears a pair of shorts, derived from American civilian style, along with ill-fitting military garb. "His shoes, the gift of a G.I., are several sizes too large. His socks are also too large and hang in wrinkles over his ankles." This outfit represents the extent to which the military's efforts at Americanization are not well suited to the needs of the Okinawan population. Later in

the play, Fisby's degree of adaptation to the local Okinawan culture is likewise indicated by his costuming. He wears his blue bathrobe as a makeshift kimono, a "geta," and "a native straw hat" Later, Captain MacLean also wears his bathrobe as a kimono, a sign that he, too, has adapted to the local culture.

Historical Context

World War II

World War n was waged from August 31, 1939, until August 14, 1945, between the Axis powers (including Germany, Italy, and Japan), and the Allied powers (including Great Britain, the USSR, and the United States). The War was carried out on many fronts, primarily in Europe and the South Pacific.

Japanese and United States Relations before Pearl Harbor

Relations between the United States and Japan had grown increasingly tense over the decade preceding United States entry into World War H. Japan had developed a strongly militaristic foreign policy, with an aggressive stance toward many of its neighbors in Asia and the South Pacific. In 1937, Japan invaded China, initiating the Sine-Japanese War, which continued until the end of World War II. In 1940, Japan formed an alliance with the Axis powers of Germany and Italy by signing the Tripartite Pact between the three nations. In 1941, Japan occupied Indochina. Not yet directly involved in World War II, the United States retaliated for the Japanese invasion of Indochina by freezing all Japanese assets and establishing an embargo on shipments of petroleum and other war materials to Japan

Pearl Harbor

The United States had maintained a staunch policy of neutrality during the first two years of World War JJ, although American sympathies leaned increasingly toward Great Britain and against Germany and Japan. Anti-war sentiments immediately changed, however, upon the Japanese bombing of a United States naval base in Pearl Harbor, on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu, on December 7, 1941. The attack, utilizing some 360 Japanese warplanes, came as a complete surprise, and permanently destroyed five of the eight United States battleships in the harbor within the first thirty minutes. In addition, some 180 U.S. military aircraft were destroyed. The United States suffered 2,300 deaths and over 1,000 injured m the attack, while the Japanese suffered less than 100 deaths. The United States declared war on Japan on December 8.

Japanese-American Internment Camps

On the home front, the United States government responded to Japanese aggression by treating nearly all people of Japanese descent living in the United States (many of them American citizens) as enemies of war. In March, 1942, the War Relocation Authority was passed under the notorious Executive Order 9066. As a result, some

110,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese residents in the United States were taken from their homes and placed in "relocation centers" essentially, concentration camps for the duration of the war. There were a total of ten internment camps, located throughout the United States, the largest being Manzanar, in California.

Although the war with Japan ended on August 14,1945, citizens were not released from the internment camps until that November. Upon release, many found that all of their assets and properties had been confiscated by the United States government, under the pretense of tax debt and storage fees. The ostensible reason for these internments had been to contain the threat of treason by Japanese Americans on behalf of Japan during World War n, however, it is now generally agreed that this was an unnecessary act on the part of the government, motivated more by racial prejudice against people of Asian descent than by any real security risk. However, the United States did not issue an official apology, or offer any reparations, until 1988, over forty years later

The War in the Pacific

At first, Japan met with military success in its engagement with the United States in the Pacific. In early 1942, Japan successfully took Manila, in the Philippines, as well as Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, and Rangoon (Burma). However, the decisive Battle of Midway, in June, 1942, was a turning point in the war. The Japanese attacked Midway Island, but were defeated by United States naval forces. In the Battle of Guadalcanal, which lasted from August, 1942, until February, 1943, Japanese forces in the South Pacific were again defeated by the Allies. In 1944, Saipan fell to Allied forces, and in 1945, the Allies launched firebombing raids against most major cities of Japan. The decisive battle on Okinawa in February, 1945, in which United States forces roundly defeated Japanese defenders of the island, was one of the last and bloodiest land battles in the Pacific.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Germany had surrendered to the Allies on May 8, 1945, soon after Hitler, tacitly acknowledging defeat, committed suicide. The war in the Pacific, however, continued. At the Potsdam conference, held in July, the Allied powers sent the Potsdam Declaration, a request to Japan for unconditional surrender, which was not met. On August 6, the United States dropped the first ever offensive atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima; three days later, another atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. The death toll as a result of these atomic bombings reached over 200,000.

Japan surrendered to the Allies on August 14, 1945, and a peace treaty was signed on September 2, aboard the United States battleship Missouri. On September 9, Japan negotiated a separate peace treaty with China, thus formally ending World War n. During the post-War era, Japan was forced to submit to occupation by Allied forces primarily, the United States until 1952.

Critical Overview

Teahouse of the August Moon was first performed at the Martin Beck Theater in New York City in October 1953. A hit Broadway production, the first run lasted for over one thousand performances. A critical as well as popular success, the play earned Patrick many awards, including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play of the Year, the Pulitzer Prize in drama, the Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award, the Theatre Club Award, the Donaldson Award, and the Aegis Award, all in 1954.

Upon the initial production of *Teahouse of the August Moon, New York Times* drama critic Brooks Atkinson had nothing but praise for the play, which he labeled "a delightful comedy," describing the overall production as "wonderful work." In another review, Brooks asserted, "No one has any difficulty in falling in love with *Teahouse of the August Moon*." He stated, "As a piece of theatre writing it is extraordinarily fresh," adding, "the marriage of form and content is seldom as happy as it is in the case of this comedy."

Atkinson favorably compared the original novel by Vem Sneider to the theatrical adaptation by Patrick, observing, "As a practiced theatre craftsman, Mr. Patrick has distilled the material [from the novel] into a headier comic stimulant." Atkinson goes on to describe the improvement which Pat-nek's play made upon the novel:

By eliminating details, sweetening the humor and sharpening the conflict between the wily natives and the naive captain, Mr. Patrick has made a pungent comedy with a tangible theme that delights everyone who distrusts military authority in civilian affairs Mr Sneider's novel provides the basic material. Mr Pat-nek, working on it with fresh relish, has made a fresh piece of writing out of it

In a 1956 review in the *New York Times*, Atkinson affirmed that *Teahouse of the August Moon* "is still one of the funniest [plays] in recent years." He described it as "a wise and original comedy," which "is still a thorough-going delight."

During the years 1954 1956, *Teahouse of the August Moon* was performed in major cities all over the globe, including London, Tokyo, Berlin, Moscow, Vienna, and Buenos Aires, as well as an amateur production on an American army base m Okinawa. In London, as elsewhere, theatre critics were especially delighted to learn that Americans were capable of poking fun at their own military exploits Drew Middleton, in a *New York Times* review from London, wrote.

Almost every cntic [in England] has remarked, in varied tones of surprise, that here is a play written by Americans which does not hesitate to josh such institutions as the United States Army, American womanhood and government policy.

Another *New York Times* review of the play's reception in London noted, "Americans laughing at themselves is a welcome theme here."

John Marion, in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, noted that *Teahouse of the August Moon* "has proved to be [Patrick's] most durable work." It was adapted to the screen by Patrick himself, in a 1956 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Production starring Marlon Brando as Sakini. In 1962, Patrick adapted Teahouse of the August Moon for television, in an NBC broadcast of "Hallmark Hall of Fame."

In 1970, however, a musical rendition of *Teahouse of the August Moon*, written by Patrick and entitled *Love I v Ladies. Kind Gentlemen*, closed after only sixteen nights on Broadway. According to Marion, the failure of the musical version was due to the fact that "Tensions during the Vietnam era made a comedy about Asians seem inappropriate." In a *New York Times* review of *Lovely Ladies. Kind Gentlemen*, Clive Barnes described it as "a strangely dated musical,"

Barnes asserted thai even the original, non-musical version of *Teahouse of the August Moon* would not be worth reviving, for: "It is a little too cute, a little too coy, a little too patronizing to the defeated Asians." He added, "Precisely geared for its time, it is now out of joint." Soon after the failure of *Lovely Ladies. Kind Gentlemen*, Patrick essentially turned his hack on Broadway, focusing his playwriting for production by community theaters.

Marion summed up the scope of Patrick's career in stating:

The success of John Patrick is ... a chart of the major trends in the American entertainment industry. Writing successfully for radio in its heyday, for Broadway, for big-budget movies oi'lhe 1950s, and finally for the emerging regional and community theatres throughout ihe country, Patrick will be remembered as a superb craftsman of popular comedies.

However, given the current climate in the United States of increased sensitivity to cultural stereotyping in the media, it seems unlikely that *Teahouse of the August Moon* the premise, characters, and dialogue of which are firmly grounded on some of the most common and offensive Western stereotypes about Asian culture will enjoy renewed popularity any time soon.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Brent has a Ph.D. in American culture, special-i~ing in film studies, from the University of Michigan, She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in the history of American cinema. In the following essay. Brent discusses the historical and cultural context of Patrick r.v play.

John Patrick's stage play *Teahouse of the August Moon*, first performed in 1953, takes place on the island of Okinawa, during the American Occupation of Japan in the aftermath of World War II. Although a fictional story presented in the form of lighthearted comedy, it is set in a very real cultural and historical context that had serious implications for the post-War era. The play thus makes reference to many real events and cultural traditions with varying degrees of accuracy. It is helpful in understanding the play to distinguish between the elements of fact and those of fiction as presented in this comedy.

Teahouse of the August Moon takes place on the island of Okinawa, the largest of a cluster of fifty-five islands and islets called the Ryukyu, located in the South China Sea. The Ryukyu Islands are sub-categorized as the Amumi island chain, in the north, the central Okinawa islands, and the Sakishima islands, in the south. Since 1972, the Ryukyu Islands have been designated the prefecture of Okinawa, under Japanese sovereignty. In Pal-rick's play, the character Sakini, an Okinawan man, provides a history of the island in terms of a series of occupations by foreign forces:

History of Okinawa reveal distinguished record of conquerors.

We have honor to be subjugated in fourteenth century by Chinese pirates.

In sixteenth century by English missionaries

In eighteenth century by Japanese war lords

And in twentieth century by American Marines

Sakini's condensed history of Okinawa is relatively accurate. Okinawa was once an independent kingdom but succumbed to a series of conquests by foreign nations As described by Sakini in the play, Okinawa, as part of the Ryukyu Islands, was indeed conquered by Chinese and Japanese forces throughout the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries. The Ryukyu Islands were valuable for their trading in luxury products from China. In 1609, the islands were conquered by the Shimazu, a powerful clan of Japanese warlords. The Shimazu family controlled a large fief called Satsuma, to which the conquered islands thereafter paid tribute. In 1871, an incident occurred in which tribal peoples of Taiwan massacred the survivors of a Ryukyuan shipwreck who had landed on their shores. As a punitive measure, Japanese forces were employed against Taiwan. As a result, Japan strengthened its claims to the Ryukyu Islands, which came under Japanese rule in 1879

As stated by Sakini in Patrick's play, Okinawa was conquered by U.S. Marines in the twentieth century. Near the end of World War JJ, Okinawa became the sight of a brutal and decisive battle between Japanese and American forces. U.S. Marines landed on Okinawa Island in April of 1945, conquering Japanese forces in the region after three months of fighting. This battle cost the United States the lives of about 12,000 men, while the Japanese sustained over 100,000 casualties, making it, as stated in an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "the last great land battle on the Pacific front."

Having defeated Japan in 1945, Allied forces maintained military occupation of the nation until 1952 United States General Douglas MacArthur was named Supreme Commander for Allied Powers during the occupation, carrying out his command from headquarters in Tokyo. The Potsdam Declaration put forth the general principals of the Occupation, which were elaborated in U.S. government policy statements as stated in an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

The essence of these policies was simple and straightforward: the demilitarization of Japan democratization, meaning that, while no particular form of government would be forced upon the Japanese, efforts would be made to develop a political system under which individual rights would be guaranteed and protected, and the establishment of an economy that could adequately support an peaceful and democratic Japan.

In addition, according to the article "Japan" in *Britannica*, the Allied forces aimed to make changes in the national education system, "convinced that democracy and equality were best inculcated through education." These changes were implemented with the passing of the Fundamental Law of Education, m 1947.

Patrick's play focuses on the efforts of the U.S. military to carry out the democratization, economic reforms, and educational initiatives indicated by the Potsdam Declaration. Colonel Purdy is described as a man on whose shoulders "the worries of the world in general and the Army Occupation in particular weigh heavily." Purdy assigns Captain Fisby to represent the United States Occupation Forces in the tiny (fictional) village of Tobiki on Okinawa Island. Fisby arrives in Tobiki with orders to implement the process of democratization in accordance with the instructions provided by "Plan B."

The aggressive attitude of the U.S. military toward the task of democratization is expressed through Colonel Purdy's comment that "my job is to teach these natives the meaning of democracy, and they're going to learn democracy if I have to shoot every one of them." Although the play is not anti-American in sentiment, much of the humor derives from the futility of the military attempting to impose an American way of life on a traditional non-Western culture. In the opening scene, Sakini, the Okinawan interpreter for the American military, addresses the audience directly, explaining the significance of the Occupation: "We tell little story to demonstrate splendid example of benevolent assimilation of democracy by Okinawa." This statement carries a strong tone of irony, as the events of the play demonstrate the resistance of the Okinawans to attempts at assimilation.

The provisions of "Plan B" in the play coincide with those of the historically real effort at democratization in post-War Japan, focusing on democracy, industry, and education. Purdy instructs Fisby that "your job in Tobiki will be to teach the natives democracy and make them self-supporting. Establish some sort of industry there," and to "establish a municipal government and build a school," which is to be "pentagon-shaped." Since the Pentagon is the headquarters of American military operations, located in Washington, D.C , this instruction highlights the absurdity of assigning a military command to establish a system of education. Further, Colonel Purdy's instructions to Fisby demonstrate the difference between outlining a plan for democratization, and actually implementing it.

Purdy tells Fisby, "When the school is built, you will organize a Ladies' League for Democratic Action. You will deliver a series of lectures on democracy as outlined in the outline." Even before arriving m Tobiki, where all of these plans are thwarted by the will of the local population, Fisby is skeptical about the feasibility of "Plan B " He ridicules the military's faith in such plans by comparing it to that of religious gospel. He tells Sakmi, "I'm going out to spread the gospel of Plan B." Fisby's initial speech to the inhabitants of Tobiki outlined for him in the instruction manual to "Plan B" expresses an idealistic vision of a democratic society He defines democracy as "a system of self-determination " in which "hereafter all men will be free and equal . Without discrimination. The will of the majority will rule' . . And Tobiki village will take its place in the brotherhood of democratic peoples the world over!" Ultimately, the villagers utilize the principles of self-determination to build their own dreams completely ignoring the instructions outlined in "Plan B." Patrick's play thus celebrates the idealistic principles of democracy, while offering a light criticism of the U.S. military's efforts to impose an American way of life on a traditional culture.

In Patrick's play, Captain Fisby is presented with the "gift" of Lotus Blossom, a young geisha woman. Fisby, assuming that a geisha is equivalent to a prostitute, is at first scandalized by her presence in and influence on the village. All of the men seek out her company, and all of the women want to be given "geisha lessons " When Sakini informs Fisby that a geisha is not a prostitute, he is caught off guard: "Well, what do they get paid for, then?" Sakini attempts an explanation of the distinction between a geisha and a prostitute:

Hard to explain fundamental difference Poor man like to feel nch. Rich man like to feel wise. Sad man like to feel happy. All go to geisha house and tell troubles to geisha girl She listen politely and say, 'Oh, that's too bad ' She very pretty She make tea, she sing, she dance, and pretty soon troubles go away.

When Fisby asks skeptically, "And that's *all* they do?" Sakini does not answer directly, replying, "Very ancient and honorable profession."

SaMni's explanation of the role, or job, of the geisha in traditional Japanese society is largely accurate. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines geisha as "a member of a professional class of women in Japan whose traditional occupation is to entertain men."

Sakini's description of the variety of skills and services of the geisha is also for the most part accurate, according to *Enyclopedia Britannica* :

Singing, dancing, and playing the samisen (a lutelike instrument) are indispensable talents for a geisha, along with the ability to make conversation. Many geisha are also adept at flower arranging, performing the tea ceremony, or calligraphy The main function of the geisha is to provide an atmosphere of chic and gaiety for her wealthy clientele Geisha are usually exquisitely dressed in traditional kimonos and delicately mannered

Furthermore, SaMni's response to Fisby's question, "And that's all they do?" is accurate in its evasiveness. From an article on geisha in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* comes this information:

"Besides providing entertainment and social companionship, geisha sometimes maintained sexual relationships with their clients." Furthermore, the "geisha system" was specifically developed in the seventeenth century as a higher-class alternative to the prostitutes, who serviced samurai, and the courtesans, who serviced the nobility.

Once the village has its first geisha, in the person of Lotus Blossom, the villagers soon vote to build a teahouse in which to be served by her. Fisby at first adamantly refuses to provide them with the building materials originally intended for the new schoolhouse. But he soon concedes, and, a few weeks later, the teahouse has been built. The stage directions describe the teahouse in significant detail: "In the center of the stage, exquisite in its simplicity, stands the teahouse. Small bells tinkle from its pagoda roof Soft lights glow through the colored paper panels. Dwarf pines edge the walk leading to a small bridge." The manner in which the guests enter the teahouse is described as highly ritualized:

Before they enter the teahouse, they remove their shoes and rinse their fingers in the ceremonial bamboo basin Then they enter and seat themselves on green floor mats The women are dressed in silk kimonos of varying hues and the majority of the men wear spotless white suits

The main entertainment in the teahouse, however, turns out to be a wrestling match. Afterward, Fisby and MacLean lead the villagers in singing "Deep in the Heart of Texas."

Patrick's rendition of the Japanese teahouse and its uses are largely a stretch of the imagination. The tea ceremony is a long and highly valued tradition in Japan. It began in the thirteenth century as a practice of Zen monks to help them stay awake while meditating long hours. By the fifteenth century, the tea ceremony had developed into a social occasion for discussing art and aesthetics. In the sixteenth century, Sen Rikyu, "the most famous exponent of the tea ceremony," developed the practice according to the aesthetic of simplicity. The traditional tea ceremony was conducted in accordance with four main principles, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: "harmony between guests and the implements used; respect, not only among participants but also for the utensils; cleanliness ... and tranqmlity." The ritual of the tea ceremony consists of the

host first bringing tea utensils into the room, offering the guests special sweets, and then preparing and serving them tea made of pulverized tea leaf stirred in hot water The serving of sweets and tea may be preceded by a light meal After the tea is consumed, the guests are free to inquire about the various implements, which are afterward earned from the room and the ceremony is completed.

The teahouse, called a *cha-shitsu*, itself is a crucial element of the ceremony Originally a special room within the house, it was later developed as a freestanding structure separate from the house. In the article "Cha-shitsu" in *Britannica* in the building of the teahouse, "Great care is taken in the choice of matenals for and construction of the *cha-shitsu* so as to give it a sense of rustic yet refined simplicity." The dimensions are no more than nine square feet, enough to seat five people or less. In essence, the Japanese tea ceremony is an exercise in aesthetic refinery.

The dominion of aesthetic scruples over Japanese life has, as its culminating instance, the tea ceremony a marvel of constrained social ballet Associated with this triumph of manners in an art of mood and evocation, in which significance is found hi the small, concentrated gesture, the sudden revelation of transcendent meaning in what is most ordinary and unassuming

Several aspects of the teahouse in Patrick's play are completely inaccurate Although the stage directions appropriately describe it from the outside as "exquisite m its simplicity," the space and events within are a far cry from the dimensions and uses of any real Japanese teahouse. While the traditional teahouse is no more than nine square feet and seats no more than five people, the teahouse in the play is large enough to seat a tiny village with room for a wrestling match! Furthermore, the very idea of a wrestling match in a Japanese teahouse is completely at odds with the aesthetic values and traditional entertainments of the tea ceremony. In his fictional story, Patrick may be combining the Japanese tea ceremony with the Japanese spectator sport of Sumo wrestling.

Patrick's fictional story, set in a real context, represents Japanese culture and history with varying degrees of accuracy. The ability to distinguish between fact and fiction m any work of literature is a useful tool in developing skills for literary analysis.

Source: Liz Brent, Critical Essay on *The Teahouse of the August Moon, m Drama for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001

Critical Essay #2

Hart has degrees in English literature and creative writing. She is a freelance editor and published writer. In the following essay, Han explores the complexities of acculturation as portrayed in The Teahouse of the August Moon

John Patrick's play *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, although first published in 1952 and therefore somewhat dated with its stereotypical characters and post World War EL themes, nonetheless remains relevant today with its underlying conception (or misconception) of acculturation. As the topic of globalization seeps into the rhetoric of all contemporary nations and modern issues of multiculturalism affect the lives of many of the world's population, it could be argued that Patrick's play, if read as a kind of social parable, is even more significant today than when it was first written. Using the idea of parable, readers can get beyond the somewhat predictable humor of this play and extract a meaningful dialogue. This dialogue, which sometimes runs counter to the comedy, raises questions about cultural differences and the consequences of acculturation.

Acculturation is an anthropological term that implies changes made in one culture by another alien and more dominant culture In theory, acculturation comes about through direct contact between individuals of each culture, with the dominant culture passing on its language, social habits and values as well as its economic, educational, and political beliefs. In *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, the overall military assumption is that the Americans will pass on their culture to the Okinawans. The U.S. officers will teach the concepts of democracy to the Okinawans. The U S. Army will build schools to indoctrinate the Okinawan children in the language and customs of the American society and will teach the adults the benefits of American capitalism. The army's plan gives little thought to what the Okinawan culture will teach the Americans Despite the fact that in *The Teahouse of the August Moon* the major mindset of the U.S. Army appears to be that their success will be determined by the total transformation of the Okinawan people into typical Americans, the subplot of the play is more aware of the reality of acculturation. In truth, acculturation is a two-way street both cultures affect one another. It is the play's sensitivity to this issue that makes it relevant even for audiences fifty years after the play was first written.

The play opens with the first example of the army's attempts at acculturation. In the first words spoken in the opening scene, the character of Sakini, an Okinawan employed as an interpreter for the U.S. military, says: "Juicy-fruit. Most generous gift of American sergeant." Gifts, often in the form of sweets, like chewing gum and chocolate, or in the form tobacco, like hard-to-get cigarettes, were used as subtle bribes to begin the process of winning the minds of strangers. In the case of World War II, these strangers were either people who were being freed from a common enemy or people who were being conquered. The bribes, in other words, were the beginning of acculturation.

But there are always complicated issues with attempts at acculturation, and since Sakini and his fellow Okinawans have a long history of being "conquered," they are very much

aware of all the hidden facets of these issues, as well as aware of how to hone the process to their own benefit. In Patrick's play, the Okinawans are not the dupes that their conquerors believe them to be. As Sakini puts it: "Okinawans most eager to be educated by conqueror." The Okinawans have learned to take what they can use, to hide what they do not want to lose, and to avoid what is most painful. To put it another way, the Okinawans, according to this play, have acculturated to the steady progression of conquerors trying to acculturate them. In the process they have learned to adjust, much as refugees and immigrants learn to adjust to their new countries today.

It is interesting to list the kinds of gifts that the U.S. military offer the Okinawans. Besides the sweets which, of course, offer nothing good in terms of their health the army offers clothes In Sakini's case, the clothes come in the form of a pair of shoes and a pair of socks, both of which are too big for him. Added to the fact that their oversize makes Sakini look like a clown, the big socks put him in a precarious position: he is commanded to "dress accordingly" to his position "as a civilian employee in the pay of the United States Army," and must therefore keep his socks pulled up In order to keep his socks pulled up, however, he must wane slowly, for if he walks fast, the big socks will fall down again. But if he walks slowly and thus keep his socks pulled up, he is accused of being a typically slow native.

This scene sums up some of the major problems of acculturation. Where one culture does not "fit" the other, attempts to adjust will always come off a bit off balance. And forcing the issue will only make the situation more awkward. In this case, the army could either have given Sakini clothes that fit him or allowed him to continue to wear his traditional clothes. But true to the nature of acculturation, the army probably didn't carry Sakini's size, and Sakini's own clothes were seen as too casual (open-toed sandals) and thus inappropriate for his stature as an employee of the U.S. government. However, as many people who have gone through an acculturation process can attest, there are places in the process that will never quite fit until both cultures find a working compromise. In other words, both cultures will have to learn to change.

Before moving on to the other instances of gift-exchange as presented in the play, it is also interesting to note that not all of the new clothes that the Okinawans receive are given directly to them by the Americans. This other subset of clothing is actually not given to them at all. Rather the Okinawans have learned that they have to look out for and take care of themselves. So when they are asked to wash the officers' clothes, the Okinawans, since the Americans tend to have a low opinion of the native people anyway, conveniently "lose" pieces of the laundry every time they wash a load. They get away with this deception because of the prejudice of the so-called dominant culture. Another example of the Okinawans using the American prejudice for their own benefit is shown when Sakini pretends to sleep or when he pretends to not know what is going on. If the Americans think Sakini is lazy, they assume he wiH often fall asleep. If they think he is ignorant, Sakini can play on their belief and make things happen in his favor by pleading ignorance. Thus in this subset of clothing that the Okinawans "lose," it is assumed by the Americans that the Okinawans are careless. Consequently, it is through this preconception of carelessness that the Okinawans can get away with their minor

crimes of thievery. In these situations, the question might be asked, who is acculturating whom9

Another gift to the Okinawans comes in the form of an army office by the name of Captain Fisby. Fisby has been given a command to build a school and turn his assigned village of Tobiki into a model of American acculturation But Fisby has one great fault He is a sensitive man. He is not a typical army hardliner who follows orders without asking questions, without improvising plans, or without cultivating conscious thoughts. Fisby, if he didn't know it before he arrived in the village, quickly discovers that acculturation is no one-way street.

Fisby believes that he has come to Tobiki bearing gifts. He is, after all, going to build a school and teach the children to read, write, and speak English. He also will offer the villagers food rations, democracy, and lessons in how to make a quick buck. But he is thrown off his path when he, too, is given gifts. The gifts that the Okinawans give are said to be given in a gesture of "not losing face." According to Sakini, the villagers want to give gifts before the conquerors give their gifts, so that the villagers do not look poor. But later in the dialogue, Sakini tells Captain Fisby that the Okinawan way to choose leaders in the village is to "just look over gifts and see who give you best gift. Then you give him best job." According to this play, the underlying purpose behind both the Okinawan and the American gift-giving is the same -in both cases the gifts are given with ulterior motives behind them Both cultures are trying to impose their own beliefs on the other. And the first attempts by both cultures are through bribes.

It appears that the most effective gifts that Captain Fisby receives are the clothes It is through the clothes that Fisby slowly becomes acculturated to the Okinawans. Fisby discards his military uniform and dons a more traditional Okinawan attire. After all, it makes sense to wear shoes that are more comfortable and more adaptable to the terrain. Wearing a straw hat in the sun is so much more practical than wearing a metal helmet. And what sense does it make to wear hot khaki trousers, shirt, and tie when the Okinawan kimono is so much cooler. It is also an interesting observation that where the U S government failed in the case of Sakini wearing the oversized shoes and socks that were impractical, Fisby's acculturation is much more successful. His clothes not only fit him, they fit his situation. Living with the Okinawans and dressing like them helps Fisby understand their ways and slowly he also alters his diet, his work schedule, and his plans. But even Fisby does not totally surrender. He realizes that acculturation means compromise.

According to Fisby's original army orders, he was to "fire those natives with the spirit of occupation." And at first, Fisby attempts to stick to the orders by declaring that some of the requests that the Okinawans make are "against regulations." But the Okinawans have been through so many different kinds of regulations, that the rules the U.S. regulations impose are not threatening. The Okinawans know that the regulations were written by people who might think a little differently then they do, but those people do not necessarily think any better. The Okinawans are not an easy people to accultu-rate They've been there, had that done to them before. They have learned to twist the

regulations, to out-think the occupiers. And it is with this in mind that they give Fisby a geisha by the name of Lotus Blossom.

It is difficult for Americans to understand the concept of a geisha. But suffice it to say that a geisha is trained m the arts, and the main focus of her arts, whether playing music, arranging flowers, writing and reciting poetry, or serving tea, is to give pleasure to men, to make them feel at ease. And Lotus Blossom is good at what she does. It is through Lotus Blossom that the villagers feel they will gain respect, for only prosperous villages have geishas. It is also through Lotus Blossom that Fisby lets down his guard and follows the twists that the Okinawans put in the army regulations. Thus, the pentagon-shaped school house that the army had requested turns into the teahouse of the August moon.

There is another gift that Fisby is supposed to bestow on the villagers, and that is an understanding of democracy. Fisby's attempts, however, fall a bit short of the mark. Or rather, his teachings of democracy backfire on him. It's not that he defines democracy improperly, it's that he defines it in its purest sense, and the villagers, with their inventive minds, once again use democracy to their advantage. Fisby tells them that under democracy "all men will be free and equal.... Without discrimination... The will of the majority will rule!" So when Fisby first tries to get rid of Lotus Blossom, Sakini replies, "Oh, please not send her away, boss. Not democratic." And when the women in the village want lipstick, perfume, and bobby pins for their hair so they can be as pretty as Lotus Blossom, they too complain that Fisby is not practicing democracy because he is discriminating against them when he refuses to give into their demands. Fisby, under the influence of his own, pure definition of democracy, gives in. It is through the eyes of the Okinawans that Fisby looks at his own culture. What he sees is not necessarily the practice of democracy as he has experienced it, but rather the principles upon which his culture was built the ideals. It is the ideals of democracy that the U S Army is preaching, even if the army itself does not practice them. And it is the Okinawans, the outsiders in terms of the American culture, who notice and point out the discrepancies. So once again, Fisby is learning as much from the villagers as the villagers are learning from him, and he sums up the lessons he has learned by stating that he no longer worries about being a success. Then he adds that he no longer knows the difference between the conqueror and the conquered. In the process of acculturation he has learned the "wisdom of gracious acceptance."

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *The Teahouse of the August Moon, m Drama for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #3

Kelly is an instructor of literature and creative writing at two schools in the Chicago area. In the following essay, he considers the outdated attitudes in The Teahouse of the August Moon *and considers whether there is an appropriate lesson for contemporary audiences to learn from the play.*

Every time a revival of John Patrick's 1952 service comedy *Teahouse of the August Moon* is suggested, me question arises about whether it has filially outlived its relevance. The story is packed with attitudes and actions that fall on a scale ranging from old-fashioned and quaint to flat-out offensive, depending on how charitable a viewer cares to be. It is a play about one culture's domination over another. Even though the dominators act with what they feel to be the best intentions, and the occupied people of post-war Okinawa do not mind the American presence, still the world has come to know too much about imperialism, especially America's stumbling over indigenous cultures in the mid-twentieth century, to look on this subject comfortably.

The case favoring revivals of this play points out the ways in which Patrick undermines the assumptions about the occupation of Okinawa, showing a deep and understated respect toward its occupants. Reading the play this way, the Okmawans are met on their own terms. By focusing on Captain Fisby, the U.S. soldier who comes to embrace the local traditions, the play itself seems to embrace those traditions. The Okmawans' use of English may be strange, but it is sound, and the buffoon of the story turns out to be Colonial Purdy, representing the rigid discomfort of the occupying army. There is a long-standing tradition in comedies, particularly ones with military settings, that sets formal social structures against chaotic natural instinct. The value that a play like *Teahouse of the August Moon* offers contemporary audiences is that it shows that the struggle against narrow-mindedness is perpetual.

The problem with taking this charitable view is that Patrick's play never overcomes its condescending attitude. It wants to convey that Okmawans are not as foolish as they seem to the Western eye, but it leaves the impression that they are still pretty foolish nonetheless. It wants to show that the army has a blindness to a perfectly functional culture, but the original culture is one that the Okinawans themselves are more than willing to abandon. The imperialist attitude, which accounts for so much of the play's humor, turns out to be the correct one in the end, embraced by the people as promising a life superior to the one they've known

It is almost impossible for modern readers to view *Teahouse of the August Moon* without being uncomfortably aware that it promotes attitudes toward race, gender, and chemical abuse that we find inappropriate today. The racism alone is enough to make sensitive audiences cringe. Contemporary authors do not write in dialect the way that Patrick did, giving Sakini a fluent but disjointed form of the English language. His twists on the language, such as saying, "This exceedingly civilized," may have sounded to Patrick and his contemporaries like a true transcription of how Japanese speakers sound when

speaking English, but this subjective interpretation is exactly why it is so seldom done anymore. Most writers today know that then: own personal interpretation of how other cultures sound is likely to be insulting and belittling.

Sakini is a problematic character for many modem audiences, as are most characters in literature who learn to thrive within oppressive circumstances. For some, the fact that a character like Sakini is able to remain happy and productive and is, in fact, able to take advantage of the verbally abusive Colonel Purdy is a sign of the natural intelligence and resourcefulness of the Okinawans as a whole, indicating Patrick's respect for his subject. For many, though, Sakini is another example of the Happy Slave myth that has comforted oppressors throughout history, letting them feel that the people being controlled would want it no other way. In this case, Patrick often allows Sakini to show himself as educated and thoughtful in his monologues to the audience. The other Okmawans do not fare so well, holding silly, childlike postures throughout, but the breadth of Sakini's character can be taken as an indication of what they are concealing too.

As much as the play is vague about how other cultures relate to America's post-war dominance, it is even more uncertain about women and their roles among men. Captain Fisby is quite outspoken regarding the fact that a woman is not chattel, to be presented from one man to another. In her last scene, Lotus Blossom explains that she learned this lesson from Fisby. saying that Mr. Seiko should not think of her as property simply because she is leaving with him. Still, the play's few mentions of equality mean little when weighed against the overall message that its male/female relationships send. Fisby is shocked when he thinks that Lotus Blossom is a prostitute and relieved when he finds out that geisha girls do not actually have sex with their clients, but only listen to their problems while smiling their pretty smiles in sympathy. On a symbolic level, this distinction, which means so much to Fisby. hardly makes any difference, since both concepts of the geisha trade entail a woman offering her beauty to a paying man. The fact that the women of Tobiki are all eager to learn the geisha trade indicates that their expectations are excessively low, that they can only think of their own self-worth in terms of men's pleasures.

Audiences that take this attitude about women to be a reflection of Ihe culture Patrick is writing about, and not of the playwright himself, can rind clues 10 the play's true attitudes in the comic character Miss Higa Jiga. As the only female character to compare to Lotus Blossom. Higa Jiga is, like the geisha girl, defined in terms of her looks. She is introduced with a stage direction that describes her as "a chunky, flat-faced, aggressive young woman with heavy glasses." The fact that she is unattractive may or may not be relevant to her function in this play, but it is unusual that a playwright would be as specific as this about details thai are better left to casting directors and set designers. It is clear that in this play the looks of the female characters define who they are. One does not need to be a strident feminist to see that the play is based on attitudes about gender that are unbalanced and outdated.

Economically the play finds its resolution with a device that may have seemed a harmless comic twist when it was first performed, but that has become less and less

socially acceptable as the years have passed. At the time, selling sweet potato brandy to the army may have seemed an ideal solution to the play's predicament, one that would leave only winners and no losers. The American soldiers would be able to relax with a few drinks, while the citizens of Tobiki would be able to profit from their method of production. Unfortunately, time has changed public attitudes toward alcohol and its use. What was once a social lubricant is now recognized as an addictive depressant. Studies of drunk driving and alcoholism in recent decades have wiped out much of the sense of freewheeling fun that the play strives for. When Patrick wrote *Teahouse of the August Moon*, a person who carried a flask of liquor in their pocket or kept a bottle stuffed in a desk drawer at work was an eccentric; today, such a figure is pathetic. Furthermore, the rise of the international drug trade and the many lives that have been ruined by it make it more difficult for modern audiences to laugh off the idea of a small village earning its financial independence by exporting an addictive substance Counties like Thailand and Columbia may have realized economic booms powered by opium and cocaine, but they certainly cannot be considered the well-adjusted, independent economies that Patrick wants audiences to assume of Tobiki. Contemporary audiences know too much to rest comfortably with Patrick's supposed solution.

With so much about the play that is outdated, audiences may wonder why people still talk about *Teahouse of the August Moon* at all today, and why it is ever performed. The play's value is that it is, basically, a story that has its human values intact, in spite of its own narrow-mindedness. The central character, Captain Fisby, is more of a sexist and cultural imperialist than either he or John Patrick realize, but at least he is a good person. While not all plays can bear continual viewing just because of one good character, those that teach audiences about the way things once were are a renewable resource, providing ever-new reasons to draw attention.

Fisby's kindness is shown in the way that he adapts to the local culture. He not only takes to wearing Okinawan clothes and abandons his army mandate to construct a school, he is also genuinely curious about the beliefs and customs of the people he is living among. His friendship with Sakini and his near-love relationship with Lotus Blossom might seem superficial, but he does in fact grow, if only a little. The symbolic gesture of Fisby "finding his cricket" is real enough. He honestly wants to do good work for the people of Tobiki, and, in trying to do so, he learns about himself and grows as a person. If one can forget about the shameful legacy of imperialism that seemed so acceptable in the middle of the last century, this personal story makes *Teahouse of the August* Moon a play worth watching and learning about.

Unfortunately, Patrick makes it impossible to forget the play's setting. The character of Captain Fisby could work in any number of settings and is currently in fashion in tales of corporate, not military, functionaries who give in to quirky local traditions. This play, though, lives under the umbrella of its title, which provides the symbolic device that cannot be ignored. While Fisby's personal quest is a satisfying fish-out-of-water story, the play's handling of the world around him is ultimately marred by its own prejudices. The teahouse, presented as a symbol of freedom, is actually a sign that the bumbling American occupational force is, in the end, morally right

The teahouse is talked about as if it were a symbol of Okinawan dignity. Captain Fisby arrives in Tobiki with a mandate to build a monument to western rationalism: a school (to indoctrinate Okmawans into Western thought) in the shape of the Pentagon (to remind them of the military power that controls them). Fisby, in defying army orders, appears to be giving due recognition to the value of local customs.

But the teahouse is not the sign of local culture that audiences wish it were. It is not valued as a place where traditions can be observed, it is explained in the play as a status symbol, a way of comparing Tobiki's economic wealth with that of other villages Mr Oshira's speech about the importance of the teahouse sounds as if it has spiritual significance it ends with "Free my soul for death" but his argument is based on money. He and the men of Tobiki feel that they need a teahouse because they are too poor to enter the teahouses in the big city. The true significance of the teahouse lies in the basic economic principle of who can afford to enter and who can't, a completely American, capitalist notion. The lesson that audiences are asked to believe is that the citizens of Tobiki cannot have pride imposed upon them with a pentagon-shaped schoolhouse, the way that the author of the mysterious army plan would like it, but that source of pride that Patrick has them yearning for, the teahouse, is every bit as superficial.

In the end, after all that Captain Fisby learns by taking control of an occupied village, he ends up just as naive, learning nothing more significant than the dubious idea that the natives prefer Western-style prosperity over their own ways after all, just as the army manual dictates. Patrick mocks the imperialist desire to preach, to teach, to force Okinawan society to conform to American standards, but the mockery is pointless because these occupied people are not interested in maintaining their traditions anyway. They want progress. Modern audiences are right to feel that the play is more complex about social relations than it seems at first, but even with the complexity it still supports the traditions that it mocks.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *The Teahouse of the August Moon, in Drama for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001

Adaptations

The Teahouse of the August Moon was adapted to the screen by John Patrick in a 1956 film, directed by Daniel Mann and starring Marlon Brando.

The Teahouse of the August Moon was adapted to television by John Patrick in a 1962 Broadcast of "Hallmark Hall of Fame," by NBC.

Topics for Further Study

This play takes place during the American Occupation of Japan in the aftermath of World War II. Learn more ahout the American defeat of Japan and the subsequent Occupation. What were the major battles and events in the conflict between Japan and the United States? What were the conditions of the defeat of Japan? What were the conditions of the Occupation?

This play concerns the building of a traditional Japanese teahouse, to be serviced by a geisha. Learn more about the Japanese tradition of the tea ceremony. Learn more about the role of the geisha in traditional Japanese society (Americans tend to equate geishas with prostitutes, but they play, in fact, very different societal roles) What is the role of the geisha in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony?

The play takes place on the Island of Okinawa, the largest of a cluster of islands in the East China Sea, called the Ryukyu Islands. Learn more about the history and culture of the Ryukyu Islands. Learn more about the Ryukyu Islands today. How have they changed since the 1950s9

This play lists many offensive stereotypes of Asian people. What stereotypical representations of Asians and Asian Americans can you find in your own current culture'? On TV7 In movies7 In books7 How has the representation of Asian and Asian-American people changed since this play was written in the 1950s?

Compare and Contrast

1939-1945: World War H is waged between the Axis and the Allied powers from 1939 to 1945. The war ends soon after the United States drops an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, on August 6, 1945, and another on the city of Nagasaki three days later. Japan surrenders on August 14.

1945-1952: Upon defeat in World War II, Japan is subject to economic, political, and educational restructuring by Allied Occupation Forces. In 1952, Japan is released from occupation, and all but the Okinawa and Sakishrma island chains are returned to Japanese sovereignty

1990s: Relations between the United States and Japan revolve around issues of ongoing tension in regard to fair trade practices and an ongoing agreement to bilateral security in military matters affecting international relations.

1945: Japanese defeat in the battle on Okinawa results in United States occupation of Okinawa.

1945-1952: Dunng the Post-War era, occupation of Japan includes a continued military presence on Okinawa. In 1952, all but the Okinawa and Sakishima island chains are returned to Japanese sovereignty.

1972: The remaining Ryukyu Island chains of Okinawa and Sakishiraa are finally returned to Japanese sovereignty, and the entire Ryukyu Island archipelago is renamed the prefecture of Okinawa, Japan. However, the United States maintains 88 military bases on the island of Okinawa.

1990s: The continuing United States military presence on Okinawa with a total of almost 30,000 military personnel remains a sore point among Okinawans. The protests of Okinawan residents mount when, in 1995, three United States servicemen are indicted for the abduction and rape of a twelve-year old Okinawan schoolgirl. Nonetheless, in 1997 Japan grants to the United States a renewal of the leases for land on Okinawa on which its military bases are located.

1942-1945: Soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States government establishes the War Relocation Authority (in March 1942), under Executive Order 9066; this office forces some 110,000 people of Japanese descent living in the United States from their homes, and imprisons them in internment camps located throughout the country.

1988: The United States government for the first time apologizes to the 60,000 surviving Japanese Americans who had been interned during World War II for the loss and suffenng caused by their imprisonment. Congress votes to offer grants of $20,000 each to all Japanese Americans who had suffered internment

1920s: There are approximately 80,000 professional geisha working in Japan.

1990s: The number of professional geisha in Japan is only a few thousand, serving primarily politicians and very wealthy businessmen.

What Do I Read Next?

The Hasty Heart: A Play in Three Acts (1945) is John Patrick's first successful stage play.

Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa (2000), edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, is a collection of poetry, short stones, and memoirs by modern Okinawan writers.

Okinawa: The Last Battle of World War II (1995), by Robert Leckie, is a history of a decisive battle in World War II.

Democracy and Race: Asian Americans and World War II (1995), by Ronald Takaki, discusses ethnic relations and the experiences of Asian Americans during World War II.

The Japanese Way of Tea: From Its Origins in China to Sen Rtkyu (1998), by Sen Soshitsu XV and translated by V Dixon Morris, presents a history of the traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

Geisha: The Life, the Voices, the Art (1995), by Jodi Cobb, includes images of geishas m pictorial art.

Further Study

Black, Wallace B, and Jean F Blashfleld, *Iwo Jima and Okinawa*, Maxwell Macrmllan International, 1993

This is a recounting of the World War II battles between the United States and Japan on the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa It is written at the youth level

Frank, Richard B , *Downfall1 The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*, Random House, 1999

This is a history of Japan from 1926 to the end of World Warn in 1945

Golden, Arthur, *Memoirs of a Geisha' A Novel*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

This widely popular contemporary fiction received much praise from critics and the general public Golden's novel is a emoir-like tale of the life of a Japanese geisha.

Molasky, Michael S , *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa Literature and Memory*, Routledge, 1999,

Molasky's book is a history of the Allied Occupation of Okinawa from 1945-1952

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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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