Think of England Study Guide

Think of England by Peter Ho Davies

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Think of England Study Guide....1
Contents....2
Introduction....3
Author Biography....4
Plot Summary....5
Characters....9
Themes....11
Style....13
Historical Context....15
Critical Overview....18
Criticism....19
Critical Essay #1....20
Critical Essay #2....23
Adaptations....27
Topics for Further Study....28
What Do I Read Next?....29
Further Study....30
Bibliography....31
Copyright Information....33

Introduction

"Think of England" (2000) began as a short story, which was later included in the anthology *Best American Short Stories 2001*. However, after intermittent periods of revision, it became part of a historical novel that Peter Ho Davies has been working on for the past few years. The story is essentially the beginning of *The Bad Shepherd* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005), a novel which centers on a Welsh barmaid's relationship with a German prisoner of war who works on her family's farm and lives on the grounds of what was once a summer camp. In bringing his characters to life, however, Davies is careful to navigate the line between history and fiction, saying. "One of the things I enjoy about fiction is its slyness. The ability to slip things in. Working with historical material, where there's already some factual basis, accentuates that slyness for me. It spurs my imagination." Rather than focus on historical moments that could potentially burden the narrative with their familiarity, Davies directs his attention instead to composing stories that embody ". . . small bubbles, pockets of history□chapters that aren't well known, or, if they are known, ones that have an overlay of popular myth." "Think of England" is one such story.

"Think of England," which is set on the evening of June 6, 1944, D-Day, tells the story of sixteen-year-old Sarah, a Welsh barmaid who conducts a clandestine affair with Colin, one of the British "sappers," or military engineers, who have come to build a mysterious base on the site of an abandoned summer camp near her village in North Wales. Nationalism runs high as the war effort galvanizes the Welsh and English who gather in The Quarryman's Arms to have a pint and to listen to Churchill's radio broadcast, a division which increases Sarah's risk of being ostracized from her community if she is discovered conducting a romance with an Englishmen, especially one in the British armed forces. "Think of England" is at once a coming-of-age tale and a tale of redemption, albeit one in which redemption occurs quite unexpectedly.

Author Biography

Peter Ho Davies was born in Coventry, England, on August 30, 1966, to a Chinese mother, Sook Ying Ho, and a Welsh father, Thomas Enion Davies. Peter Ho Davies received a bachelor of science degree in physics from the University of Manchester in 1987, and a bachelor of arts degree in English from Cambridge University in 1989. After this he moved to the United States to attend Boston University, where he received a master's degree in Creative Writing in 1993. For a brief period Davies worked in publishing in Britain, Singapore, and Malaysia, having been at one time the UK business manager for *Varsity* magazine.

Davies' stories have been published in a wide variety of magazines and literary journals, including *Harpers*, *Gettysburg Review*, *The Atlantic*, *Story*, and *The Paris Review*. His work has been widely anthologized in such annual publications as *Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards* (1998) and *Best American Stories* (1995, 1996, 2001). His debut story collection, *The Ugliest House in the World* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998), received the PEN/Macmillan Silver Pen Fiction Award and the *Mail on Sunday*/John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Davies' second collection, *Equal Love* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000), was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. In 2003, Davies was named one of twenty "Best of Young British Novelists" by *Granta* magazine.

A recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, in addition to being named a Guggenheim fellow for 2004, Davies has taught creative writing at the University of Oregon, Emory University, and the University of Michigan, where he has directed the master of fine arts program in Creative Writing. His novel *The Bad Shepherd*, from which "Think of England" is excerpted, is scheduled for publication by Houghton Mifflin in 2005.

Plot Summary

The story opens on the evening of the D—Day invasion, The Quarryman's Arms filled with patrons who have come to hear Winston Churchill's radio broadcast. Sarah, the story's protagonist, pulls pints behind the lounge bar while Jack Jones, the pub's owner, tends the public bar. The pub has the tallest aerial for miles around, and for this reason it enjoys a large clientele. At Jack's urging, Sarah steps onto a crate to warm up the wireless.

The crowd in the lounge bar consists mainly of English soldiers. A regular, Harry Hitch, asks for his "usual." Most of the soldiers are "sappers," military men on a work detail. One in particular, Colin, has caught Sarah's eye. Unbeknownst to friends and family, much less the patrons in the bar, Sarah and Colin have been "sweethearts" for the past week. They have agreed to meet when Sarah gets off from work. As Sarah hears Churchill's speech, she thinks of the men doing battle on Omaha Beach, and she feels proud to be of service to the men in uniform who have come to the pub.

Once Churchill's speech ends, Sarah turns the radio to a broadcast featuring dance music from the Savoy in London, and she sees that the patrons are clapping one another on the back and smiling at the soldiers, including the locals. The men have been transformed into heroes through the actions of their countrymen far away. Colin seems even more handsome□"like the lobby card of a film star"□now that Sarah views him in this new light.

As Sarah pours pint after pint for her customers in the lounge bar, she notices that the patrons in the public bar have begun to file out. She sees her father, Arthur, among the men, and she wonders if they are leaving because they must rise early and tend to their work on their farms or if they are leaving because they feel out of place in the midst of the British soldiers' celebration. She would like to buy her father a pint, but she knows that he is much too proud for that. Their relationship has changed since her mother's death three years ago, for Sarah is now in charge of keeping the farm's books, a responsibility her father entrusted to her once she obtained a job at the pub. Sarah is sad to see the men go, but she knows that their absence decreases her chances of being seen with Colin when they rendezvous after hours.

The pub is filled with soldiers and diehards now, and Sarah observes that for once the talk isn't about politics. The village is nationalistic in its views toward the British, and Sarah thinks it is "like so much tosh" that disputes are still being fought with as much fervor as they were when they first arose more than forty years ago. The majority view in the village is that the war is an English war and, therefore, one that does not concern the Welsh. The Welsh still consider the English to be "occupiers," but Churchill's rousing broadcast has temporarily put an end to such divisiveness, yet a palpable tension between English and Welsh patrons still exists within the pub.

On this night when the air is charged with patriotism, Sarah, though she is proud to be Welsh, wishes she could be British. Her father, a "staunch nationalist," would never

entertain such a thought, for he has never forgiven Churchill for the riots that occurred at Tonypandy. Sarah knows that nationalism and provincialism go hand in hand, yet she suspects that at the heart of every nationalistic argument is the desire "[t]o be important, to be the center of attention, not isolated." She feels excited because the soldiers and the broadcast crew from the BBC Light Program are coming to her, thus eliminating her own sense of isolation.

The sappers are building a mysterious base located on the site of an old holiday camp. Boys from the village spy on the camp, descending from the trees at dusk to explore the buildings while pretending to be commandos. Speculation about who will occupy the base runs rife throughout the village, but Jack hopes that the Yanks will come because they spend the most money. The villagers hope to see film stars like James Stewart or Tyrone Power pass through on their way to East Anglia, but, as is so often the case, they must settle for "gangly, freckle-faced farm boys" instead. One such boy, a tail-gunner from "Kentuck," presents Sarah with a gift of a torn parachute which contains enough silk for a petticoat and two slips. When Sarah tries to politely return the gift, the tail-gunner insists that she keep it, saying, "Why, you're what we're fighting for!"

As Sarah watches Colin talking to one of his fellow soldiers, she wonders if Colin will give her a gift to remember him by. She thinks that she could get him to tell her about who the camp is for, but she reconsiders, realizing that it would be "unpatriotic" and "disloyal to Britain." More important, such an act would be disloyal to Wales. She wouldn't want to give the British an excuse to call the Welsh unpatriotic. "Only the Welsh, it occurs to her, are allowed to declare themselves that." Sarah continues to speculate about the new camp, especially since Colin told her that the work is almost completed. She realizes that there will be nothing to keep Colin in the village once the work is done.

Harry Hitch interrupts Sarah's reverie with a request for another scotch. Harry, who is a star with the BBC Light Program, tells jokes that Sarah can't quite understand even though her "good schoolroom English" got her the job at the lounge bar where so many English patrons gather. Harry tells offensive jokes that make fun of the Welsh language and temperament. Harry continues his monologue as each joke is met with cheers and applause. Sarah glances at Mary Munro, a radio actress, for support. Mary tries to persuade Harry to stop, but he refuses.

Harry begins to make fun of Sarah's youth and naïveté by telling jokes that question a girl's innocence and sexual experience. Sarah, offended by Harry's insinuation, throws his drink in his face. From across the room, Colin asks Sarah if she's all right. Harry feigns remorse for his comment, but then starts another round of jokes when Sarah accepts his hand offered in reconciliation. Sarah tries to prevent Colin from making a scene, but he challenges Harry, taking a swing at him. Harry takes a pratfall to make Colin look foolish. Jack prevents Colin from taking another swing by grabbing him around the chest, forcing the breath out of him. Mary and Tony, the sound engineer, help a drunken Harry out of the bar.

Sarah recalls something Mary said to her once about Harry's past, that his wife had been killed in the Blitz. "You wouldn't think to look at him, but it was true love," Mary told her. Sarah begins cleaning up the bar as a call for last orders is made in both English and Welsh. She catches herself swaying gently to the music on the radio when Jack turns it off. He says the dishes can wait and lets her go home early. Sarah suspects that Jack knows of her rendezvous with Colin, so she must be especially careful not to be seen with him. Sarah's romantic feelings reach a higher pitch when she recalls her promise of going somewhere "more private" with her new sweetheart.

Colin waits for her around the corner from the pub. He calls to her, and as she goes to meet him, Sarah anticipates what the night will bring. She considers herself to be rather worldly for a girl of sixteen, having kissed most of the local boys, even David, the village's evacuee from London. She thinks that she has "acquitted herself well" with Colin, and that she has maybe even surprised him on occasion with her knowledge about physical intimacy.

Sarah rides on the handlebars of Colin's bike, feeling slightly self-conscious about the way Colin stares at her bum. Colin pedals through the night, the bike gathering speed as they coast downhill, Sarah's skirt billowing to reveal her legs. When she moves to adjust her skirt, Colin places his hand over hers, saying, "Hold still, love. I've got you."

They arrive at Camp Sunshine, and Sarah remembers viewing the camp from the hillside during the hot summer months when she was young and tended her father's sheep. She recalls seeing the pool below her and imagining its coolness. Such retreats were not for the locals who could barely afford the occasional day trip to the sea. With this memory firmly in mind, Sarah asks Colin to take her to the pool. He had thought that one of the cottages would be a more comfortable place for them to tryst, but he pedals toward the pool and the nearby playground, where they stop to play on the swings.

Sarah is eager to see the pool once again, and she mistakes the tarpaulin that covers the pool for the surface of the water itself. Colin explains that the tarpaulin is there to keep out leaves and other debris, and he disappears underneath the cover to demonstrate that the pool has been drained. At first Sarah doesn't know where he has gone, but then she sees him mimic the dorsal fin of a shark as his language takes on a flavor of sexual innuendo. Colin takes Sarah by the hand and leads her into the deep end of the pool, imitating various other sea creatures along the way in an attempt to physically possess her.

Sarah and Colin begin kissing, and she feels herself turning in his arms as his grip upon her tightens. Soon she finds herself pressed against the pool's tile wall that "smells sharply of dank, chlorine, and rotten leaves." Colin, in an attempt to manipulate Sarah's affection for him, tells her that he will be leaving soon. He wonders if she will miss him when he's gone. He tries to weaken her resolve by telling her that he could be at the front by this time next month, and that he wished he had something to remember her by, something to help him keep up his "fighting spirits." Sarah, enamored of her sweetheart

and eager for experience, acquiesces, allowing Colin to slide his hand against her thigh, pushing the silk slip out of the way.

When Sarah realizes Colin's true intent, she tells him, "*Nargois*!" but he doesn't understand Welsh and so continues his assault. Sarah feels pressure and pain, and she thinks twice about screaming for help for fear of getting caught. Finally, she lifts her head and catches Colin under the chin, forcing him to step back. He curses at her with a word she doesn't understand, and she curses at him in Welsh in retaliation. Hearing a language he doesn't comprehend makes Colin even more angry now that his sexual overtures have been rebuffed. "Why don't you just give it up and speak English, like the rest of us?" he says. He changes his attitude, however, and tries one last time to resume his "lovemaking," but Sarah, afraid of what additional harm may come to her, is already straightening her clothes and looking for an exit. Colin's realizes that Sarah is no longer susceptible to his charms, and he begins cursing at her again.

Just when Sarah fears another attack from Colin, she hears shouts coming from above as flashlights dart across the landscape. She is relieved that help has arrived, but with that help comes the chance of being discovered with an English soldier. Before she can ask Colin what they should do, he disappears by scrambling up a ladder and out into the night.

Weak and shaking from the attack, Sarah manages to climb out of the pool. She hears shouts coming from across the camp, and she thinks that the local boys are up to their mischief again. She hurries over to the playground where the bicycle has been left. As Sarah mounts the bike, she notices that her slip has been torn, and she feels like weeping for having lost her innocence in such a violent fashion.

Sarah's body hurts as she pedals home. She knows that she is stealing Colin's bike, yet she could care less about the consequences. She knows that he won't ask about it, but if he does, "she'll pretend that she's forgotten her English."

Characters

Arthur

Arthur is Sarah's father and a widower who entrusts the family finances to his daughter now that she has a paying job. He is a sheep farmer who visits The Quarryman's Arms occasionally. He prefers to remain at the public bar with his Welsh-speaking friends rather than enter the lounge where Sarah serves the English-speaking patrons. He wears a "frayed dark suit" that was his "Sunday best" before Sarah was born.

Colin

Colin is one of the "sappers"—men who mend roads, dig ditches, or lay bricks—who is working on the new military base near the holiday resort. He is a corporal in the British military. He's known Sarah for a week, but she considers him to be her "sweetheart." The only physical description given of him is that he has a mustache. He lures Sarah to the abandoned campsite and assaults her sexually.

David

David is the only boy whom Sarah has kissed lately—nothing more than "goodnight kisses," but she once kissed him longer "to make him blush on his birthday." An evacuee from England, David is younger than Sarah. He is described as being "a bit moony."

Harry Hitch

Harry Hitch is the "star" of a BBC radio comedy show that airs on the Light Program. Harry has a voice that belies his physical presence. Harry is a regular at The Quarryman's Arms, and he frequently makes fun of the Welsh, whom he refers to as "Taffs." He cracks jokes filled with innuendo and double entendre, but becomes insulting when he's had too much to drink. Harry starts to attack Sarah verbally, but his colleagues from the BBC and Jack, the pub's proprietor, stop him before he causes too much trouble. Mary Munro suggests that the reason why Harry drinks so much is because he lost his wife in the Blitz. "You wouldn't think to look at him, but it was true love," she tells Sarah.

Jack Jones

Jack Jones is the proprietor of the Quarryman's Arms. He protects Sarah, intervening on her behalf when Harry Hitch insults her with a joke about Welsh girls. Jack lets Sarah leave early on the evening of D-Day. Sarah suspects that Jack, a Welshman, knows

she's seeing a British soldier, so she must be discreet when keeping her rendezvous with Colin.

Mary Munro

Mary Munro is an actress who is known for the many voices and accents she performs for BBC radio. She intervenes when her colleague, Harry Hitch, has too much to drink and becomes verbally abusive toward Sarah. Mary also gives Sarah the following advice: "All you need to know about Englishmen, Welshmen, or Germans, for that matter, is that they're all men. And you know what they say about men: one thing on their minds . . . and one hand on their things."

Sarah

Sarah, a sixteen-year-old Welsh barmaid, is the story's protagonist. She yearns for attention and experience, yet she risks being ostracized by her father and her village, which is a very nationalistic community, if her romance with Colin, a member of the British military, is discovered. Sarah works in the lounge side of the pub because she speaks "good schoolroom English." Even though she's only sixteen, she's been working at the pub for nearly a year. Sarah longs to receive the attention of a film star, and this need allows Colin to take advantage of her. At the summer camp, she tries to fight him off, but not until he's taken her virginity.

Tail-Gunner from Kentuck

The tail-gunner from Kentuck is an American airman who passed through north Wales on his way to East Anglia and stopped in at the pub for a drink. He gave Sarah a bundle wrapped in brown parcel paper that contained a torn parachute, which provided enough silk for her to make a petticoat and two slips. At first she tried to give the bundle back, but the soldier insisted that she keep it because, he said, "You . . . . Why, you're what we're fighting for!"

Tony

Tony is a second engineer for the BBC. He works with Harry Hitch on a radio comedy show for the BBC's Light Program. He helps Mary Munro escort Harry Hitch out of the pub when he becomes drunk and obnoxious.

Themes

Nationalism

Nationalism, and the abiding undercurrent of patriotism that often accompanies it, remains a galvanizing force within The Quarryman's Arms. The pub is divided into two separate sections to accommodate its Welsh- and English-speaking patrons; Sarah, with her "good schoolroom English," has been hired to tend bar in the lounge while the pub's owner, Jack, serves the Welsh patrons at the public bar, where they talk constantly about politics. Old wounds, such as those inflicted by the British during the Great Strike and the Tonypandy Riots, are not forgotten by the Welsh, and they continue to demonstrate a deep-seated mistrust of the British as a result. Drawing upon their memory of the historical incidents mentioned above, the Welsh regard the war as England's war, for the British are regarded as "occupiers" who persist in the "imperialistic, capitalistic" ways they first demonstrated during the Great War. By comparison, the Welsh view themselves as more moderate and agrarian.

Sarah realizes that these nationalistic attitudes persist in part because of provincialism and isolation, and that everyone, regardless of where they may come from, wants to be the center of attention rather than isolated. Nationalism is a form of defense, a way of protecting that which is valuable, like the museum treasures that are kept in the old stone quarry. "And nationalism is a way of putting it back in the center, of saying that what's here is important enough," she concludes. "It's a redrawing of the boundaries of what's worthwhile."

Nationalism is also expressed through the language and culture of the story's characters. Harry Hitch, a broadcaster with the BBC, makes fun of the Welsh language and temperament, using the one word of Welsh he knows ("ta" or "thanks") to order more drinks. He denigrates the Welsh language because he, being British, expects English to be the main language spoken throughout the United Kingdom, forgetting that its territories and peoples are anything but homogenous. There is also the implication that he, as a paying customer, should be served in the language to which he is accustomed. Colin, another Englishman, also demonstrates this attitude of nationalistic superiority when he insists that Sarah speak English whenever they are together. (She had tried to give him Welsh lessons, but he quickly abandoned them.) This attitude contributes to the story's climactic scene, and thus reveals the cultural perspectives of both characters, when Sarah tells him, "*Nargois*!" as he forces himself upon her. Her defiant stance is emblematic of the long history between Wales and England.

Film Stars

Davies refers to film stars in the story to underscore an atmosphere of provincialism and the sense of isolation that many of the villagers, especially Sarah, experience. For example, whenever American airmen pass through North Wales on their way to bases

in East Anglia, members of the village search their faces with the hope of glimpsing one of the famous enlisted men like James Stewart or Tyrone Power, but instead they usually encounter one of the "gangly, freckle-faced farm boys" like the tail-gunner from Kentuck. Consequently, the villagers' expectations are deflated and their sense of isolation remains firmly in place. Sarah, on the other hand, feels as though the world is coming to her when Churchill's broadcast concludes and so many British soldiers and workers for the BBC celebrate the D—Day invasion.

Though Sarah has only seen swimming pools at the movies, she identifies with Esther Williams, the swimming champion turned film star, whom she considers to be "the most beautiful woman in the world." Sarah longs for a glamorous life like that of her movie idol, and this need for attention, based as it is upon a naïvé perception of the outside world, subsequently contributes to her misjudging Colin's true character.

Style

Imagery

Though "Think of England" does not abound with imagery, Davies chooses images that loom powerfully in the reader's imagination. Furthermore, these images enhance the story's characterization as they visually render a character's psychological state. For example, when the tail-gunner from Kentuck first presents a torn parachute to Sarah, she declines his gift for fear he will get into trouble, though she immediately calculates that the parachute contains enough silk for "a petticoat and two slips." Even though the tail-gunner insists that she accept her gift, Sarah's fears manifest themselves once more, this time in a dream in which the tail-gunner parachutes after having bailed out from his downed plane, his silhouetted form "hanging in the night sky, sliding silently toward the earth, under a canopy of petticoats." She has difficulty reconciling the tail-gunner's gift of a parachute with its intended purpose, especially since silk undergarments constitute a luxury during wartime. Later, the image of the torn slip symbolizes Sarah's loss of innocence as she pedals homeward, vowing to mend the tear with needle and thread. The tears she sheds suggest that her broken heart and psyche will take much longer to repair.

Sarah's longing to live a more glamorous life manifests itself in the image of a swimming pool. Sarah considers the film star Esther Williams, who was once a swimming champion, to be beautiful and, therefore, someone to be admired and emulated. Sarah remembers seeing the camp's swimming pool from high above a hillside when she was young and tended sheep with her father, and the image of the pool suggested a life that would forever remain separate from her. Because her family was poor and could not afford a camp membership, Sarah was forced to swim in the sea. This memory is revived when Colin takes her by the camp at night: the first place Sarah wants to see is the pool. However, the pool has been drained and covered with a tarpaulin, which Sarah mistakes for the water's surface until Colin demonstrates that the pool is indeed empty. Thus, Sarah's hope of fulfilling her fantasy of sitting poolside and running her hand through the water like a movie star ends in disappointment as she's greeted by the smell of ank, rotting leaves and chlorine.

Another image associated with Sarah's coming of age is that of her well polished shoes, which she snaps together quickly to prevent Colin from looking up her skirt. As she rides atop the handlebars of Colin's bicycle, the shoes remain polished and without a mark, like Sarah's reputation. Shortly thereafter, when Colin leads Sarah into the emptied pool, she scuffs her shoes on the tiles, and she immediately thinks, "*I just polished them*," knowing, perhaps, that the scuffed shoes are a sign that she is no longer innocent. Davies, through the use of figurative speech, reverses this image to comment on Colin's cowardly lack of responsibility when Sarah realizes his true character: "A clean pair of heels, she thinks, the English phrase so suddenly vivid she feels blinded by it." Through the use of a single image, Davies delves into the psychological state of one character as he comments upon another.

Figurative Speech and Gesture

Throughout the story there is an abundance of puns, jokes, and gestures that propel the narrative forward. Davies uses figurative speech to state indirectly opinions and beliefs that would be too awkward for his characters to state in a forthright manner. For example, Harry infers that the Welsh are afraid to do battle against the Germans when he tells the joke about the "Taffy" who, because he could not comprehend English spelling, enlisted in the RAF, the Royal Air Force, instead of the NAAFI, which is an organization committed to providing military servicemen with recreational and leisure services. This, Harry suggests, is the only way that the Welshman would enlist in the military□by accident. Although Harry's jokes are laced with sexual innuendo and border on the obnoxious, he would risk a better chance of causing a brawl if he did not conceal his sentiments□namely, that Welsh girls are poor, inexperienced lovers□under the cloak of humor. Finally, Sarah throws a drink in his face out of disgust, but this does not prevent Harry from making more jokes at her expense.

Colin also uses gestures and figurative speech to suggest his physical desire for Sarah. If he had made a crude overture to possess her physically, then he most certainly would have been rebuffed. Colin wastes no time communicating his desire, for when they arrive at the pool, he disappears under the tarpaulin, pushing his hand up from below so that it mimics a shark's dorsal fin cutting through the waves. "What's that?" asks Sarah. "Me manhood," Colin responds, the taut fabric acquiring yet another association. He continues to mimic other sea creatures in an attempt to get close to Sarah physically, finally wrapping his arms around her in the guise of an "octopus." His childish play succeeds, however, for soon he and Sarah kiss.

Historical Setting

Davies sets "Think of England" against the backdrop of a historical event like the D—Day invasion to establish an atmosphere that the reader can immediately identify, which in this story is one of fervid nationalism. Specifically, Davies uses this historical context to examine nationalistic beliefs that exist within a context of wary tolerance. These are not the nationalistic beliefs expressed by the competing forces of the Axis and Allied nations, however, but those of two nationalities□the English and the Welsh□who are fighting on the same side. This setting, which remains unburdened by an excess of historical fact and detail, allows for the story to develop a more complex and resonant tone, one that is enhanced by the realistic style of writing and the divided loyalties of the characters themselves. Furthermore, a historical setting like the one found in "Think of England" offers the reader a fictional glimpse into an aspect of history that might not otherwise be explored.

Historical Context

Eagle Tower

The castle constructed by Edward I at Caernarvon is a "conscious imitation" of the fortress at Constantinople, the city that had been the seat of the Roman Empire for nearly a thousand years. The castle's architect, Master James of St. George, no doubt was familiar with the discovery of bones at Caernarvon that were believed to be the remains of Magnus Maximus, the father of Constantine, the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire. The castle, which is constructed of light-colored stone and features octagonal towers, emphasizes an impressive display, a symbol of domination and strength. Furthermore, the castle's design imparts an "especial dignity," though the castle's appearance in no way discounts its function as an instrument of war.

The Eagle Tower at Caernarvon Castle features vaulted wall-chambers of both octagonal and hexagonal design, with large central apartments, a kitchen, and two chapels. The tower was probably designed for one of Edward I's loyal friends, Otto de Grandson, a Savoyard who became the first justiciar of Wales. According to legend, Otto de Grandson saved Edward's life by sucking out the poison from a wound Edward had received after being attacked by an assassin in Syria. The Eagle Tower, with its triple turrets, stands, therefore, as a testament to an enduring friendship.

The Great Strike of 1903

The Penrhyn quarry in Wales was the site of a labor struggle that began in November 1900 and ended in November 1903. According to John Davies, author of *A History of Wales*, "The dispute arose from the special nature of the quarryman's craft, from the particular ethos of the quarrying communities and from the way in which the second Baron Penrhyn (1836—1907) interpreted his rights as an employer." The differences in the two parties couldn't be more dramatic, with Baron Penrhyn occupying his castle and the quarrymen and their families living in villages. He was Anglican, Tory, and "arrogantly English," whereas the quarrymen, who spoke only Welsh, were Calvinist church-goers who challenged the current political climate. Baron Penrhyn and his family provided schools and hospitals for the quarrymen's families, but in exchange for these basic services they expected absolute obedience.

Because the quality of the rock varied greatly, the quarrymen would usually reach an agreement, known as a "bargain," with the management that allowed the quarrymen to negotiate their wage based on the amount of work that needed to be done. Thus, the quarrymen regarded themselves more as contractors rather than employees. Management, however, eliminated the quarrymen's autonomy by abolishing the bargain completely. The quarrymen realized that they must organize themselves into a union if they wished to retain the bargain and a higher pay rate. When the Great Strike began in November of 1900, it divided Great Britain, arousing the attention of the Free Labour

movement, who opposed trade unions, and those who provided support to the strikers by contributing money. There were approximately 2,800 men working at the Penrhyn quarry when the strike began, but by the spring of 1902, 700 had returned to work while 1,300 sought work in the coalfields of South Wales. Soldiers had to be brought in to protect the strikebreakers, who were called "scabs" and, in Welsh, "*cynffonwyr*," or "blacklegs." The slate industry in Wales never quite recovered from the strike.

Tonypandy Riots of 1910

The riots at Tonypandy, a mining town in Wales, were the culmination of a period in British labor relations known as the "Great Unrest." Miners sought to prevent a wage system that the colliery owners wanted to introduce, whereby miners would be paid according to the amount of coal produced. However, some types of coal were easier to mine than others, and the owners accounted for this difference by paying an allowance, which they eventually refused to pay for fear of having to pay high wages. In October of 1910, workers at the Cambrian Combine refused to accept a lower wage offer. In November, more than 800 men were locked out, and 12,000 miners went on strike. Scuffles soon broke out between the striking miners and police as the rioting spread to the streets of Tonypandy, where many shop windows were broken.

Once the riots had ended, the current Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, sent troops to keep the peace. The miners believed that Churchill had sided with the colliery owners, and that this show of force constituted a "conspiracy against the working class." The occupation lasted for months, and the miners, forced by poverty to accept the colliery owners' terms and conditions of employment, returned to work nearly a year later. The residents of Tonypandy, and, indeed, most of Wales, never forgave Churchill for robbing the miners of what had been a hard-won, albeit temporary, victory.

London Blitz

The Blitz, an abbreviated form of the German word *Blitzkrieg*, or "lightning war," was the Luftwaffe's sustained bombing campaign of major British cities, particularly London, during World War II. The Blitz began on September 7, 1940, and extended through May 1941. The Luftwaffe challenged the Royal Air Force (RAF) in an attempt to establish control of the skies above Britain, with the first air raids occurring over the docklands in London's East End. The attacks eventually encompassed the ninety-five boroughs and districts that comprise the greater London area, leaving one in six Londoners homeless. Those residents who did not remain in London sought refuge in the English countryside or in countries within the United Kingdom. Fires, floods, and food shortages were common. The raids originally took place during both the day and night, but the Germans switched to nightly raids to protect their aircraft, though the British were able to detect the German planes using radar.

In November of 1940, the Germans began attacking industrial cities such as Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester, and Sheffield. The Germans sought to cripple

British manufacturing, as well as spread fear and diminish morale through the countryside. Ironically, the Blitz strengthened British resolve to defeat the Nazis. In spite of the violence and devastation wrought by the Germans on a nightly basis, British citizens remained defiant, seeking shelter in tube stations at night and going about their business during the day fortified by an "extraordinary blossoming . . . of comradeship and good will."

D—Day

D—Day is a military term used to indicate the day on which an attack or operation will begin, though the most famous D—Day in history is the one which occurred on June 6, 1944, the day the Allied Forces landed on the beaches of Normandy by the light of a full moon. The amphibious attack was originally planned to take place one day earlier, but bad weather delayed the assault against the German stronghold on Omaha Beach, which was marked by steep cliffs and, therefore, offered the greatest protection against attack. The risk of casualties was high, as it was on the other landing points of Utah Beach, Juno Beach, Sword Beach, and Gold Beach, which were not actual beaches but code names used for purposes of secrecy.

The Battle of Normandy (code-named *Operation Overlord*) inaugurated the Allied Forces' campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi control. In addition to the amphibious assault staged at each of the five landing points, paratroopers from two U.S. airborne divisions were dropped on both the advance and rear flanks to secure the landings. Rather than confront German forces in a head-on assault, as was done in World War I at the expense of a great many lives, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill suggested to the Allied commander Dwight D. Eisenhower that the Allied Forces attack the periphery of western Europe and allow insurgency movements (such as the French Resistance) within the Nazi-controlled territory to break through enemy lines and usher troops in. This plan was achieved brilliantly once the Battle of Normandy was won and the Allied Forces were able to force German troops into a position of retreat.

Critical Overview

Unfortunately, there is little criticism available for "Think of England," in part because Davies has yet to publish his novel *The Bad Shepherd*, from which the latest version of the story is excerpted. Although "Think of England" is included in the anthology *Best American Short Stories 2001*, reviews of that book generally refer to the composition of the volume as a whole, offering plot summaries of a few selected stories rather than focusing on the individual achievements of their authors.

Contemporary Authors Online quotes Jay A. Fernandez's review of Davies' short story collection *The Ugliest House in the World* for *Washington Post Book World*, which observes that Davies writes with "equal authenticity" about disparate historical periods and locales, "evoking time and place with what appears to be an impressive acuity." Also quoted in *Contemporary Authors Online*, a writer for *Kirkus Reviews* notes that the stories in Davies' debut collection exhibit an "unblinking, persuasive view of human nature, as well as a deft hand at plotting." According to *Contemporary Authors Online*, Davies' second collection, *Equal Love*, garnered praise from *Publishers Weekly* for the author's diverse perspectives on the theme of love and the obligations that exist between people, stories which remain unified by Davies' "compassionate voice, sure craftsmanship, and complex vision." Similarly, Jacqueline Carey, in a review for *The New York Times*, noted that Davies' stories are not "dominated by a single, overweening voice: he emphasizes the most basic bonds between people rather than their individual opinions, their quirks of personality."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Remy is a freelance writer in Warrington, Florida. In the following essay, Remy considers the way nationalistic beliefs shape the story's characterization and dramatic development.

In Peter Ho Davies' short story "Think of England," the men who frequent The Quarryman's Arms are divided by more than socioeconomic class or their respective languages and cultures; they are divided by an intense nationalism that allows old enmities to persist and flourish, especially during a time of war when everyone must account for his actions and decide if the present course is indeed correct. Once again, the Welsh and the English find their fortunes married to each other, and, once again, they cooperate, however grudgingly. Neither one can fully accept the other's differences. Rather than challenge one another outright, they do so indirectly through furtive glances, jokes, and insinuations. This undercurrent of nationalism is not lost upon Davies' protagonist, for Sarah comprehends both the Welsh- and English-speaking worlds as they occupy their respective places in the pub, though her understanding of nationalistic tendencies is more often than not a projection of her own need to belong to a world outside the borders of her village. Thus, Davies uses nationalistic ideas and beliefs to shape dramatic tension and characterization within the story.

A sense of history pervades the story, one that the Welsh patrons at the public bar are loathe to forget, for The Quarryman's Arms was once a refuge for striking quarrymen; their tankards hang from the ceiling as a testament to the village's undying loyalty even though quarrying has been replaced by sheep farming as a way of life. Still, men like Sarah's father, Arthur, can remember how English troops moved in to quell the Great Strike and the riots at Tonypandy, forever depriving laborers of the opportunity to earn a decent wage. The strikers' rebellious spirit gave rise to nationalistic fervor in the twenties and thirties, and the village would not have survived without it, for British domination at that time was almost too much to bear. Hearing Churchill's voice on the wireless evokes these memories of oppression for the Welsh, as though old hostilities had been renewed against them and not the Axis Powers.

The Welsh patrons' long memories make them cautious, if not suspicious, of the English when they are in their company. Davies uses this sense of history to create a dramatic tension within the story as the Welsh, keeping to the public bar, "nurse their beer, suck their pipes, and steal glances down the passage to where Sarah is serving." The Welsh sit quietly assessing the English, so many of them dressed in military uniforms made of Welsh wool, as they celebrate the D-Day invasion. The current military actions recall those of the past when the Welsh referred to the British as "occupiers." Indeed, that is the name the Welsh give to the "sappers," or military construction crew, that is building a base on the outskirts of the village. The past is the present, and the two nationalities remain divided. Davies uses these separatist views to underscore the effects that history can have on a place and its people, especially when these people are forced by necessity to coexist.

BOOKRAGS

Even the younger generations, as embodied by sixteen-year-old Sarah, are aware that nationalism can exact a high price. Because so many of the people in her village distrust the British, her affair with Colin must be kept secret. If she is seen with him outside the pub, she risks being ostracized from her father, a "staunch nationalist." Sarah must also keep an eye on Jack, whom she believes is aware of her rendezvous after work, and this suspicion gives even greater weight to her actions. In other words, the village's nationalistic view of the British draws her toward, rather than shelters her from, the type of love she has always imagined□one filled with glamour, romance, adventure, and even a bit of danger, which, unfortunately, she finds in large supply.

As the story's protagonist, Sarah is keenly aware of her surroundings, though she remains largely unaware of people's private motivations. This incongruity between her interior state of mind and her view of the outside world creates tension within the story that arouses the reader's compassion. Sarah knows that her "good schoolroom English" has earned her a job at the lounge bar so that she may act as a buffer between the pub's Welsh proprietor and his English patrons. Like so many of his compatriots, Jack, a veteran of the Great War, blames English imperialism and capitalism for the struggles the Welsh have had to endure. Though the Welsh temporarily set aside their circumspection to celebrate the landings at Normandy, they believe that the outcome of this second world war will be no different than the first as far as they are concerned. Sarah is wise enough to comprehend that provincialism and isolation have contributed to her countrymen's nationalistic views; however, she rather simply believes that their nationalism stems from a desire "[t]o be important, to be the center of attention, not isolated," a desire she knows all too well and which contributes significantly to the story's denouement.

Consequently, the spirit of the celebration makes Sarah yearn "to be British tonight of all nights." She is a young woman who would rather live in the present moment than talk of "past glories." Sarah is proud to be Welsh, but she feels "a long way from the center of life, from London or Liverpool or . . . America." The soldiers and the crew from the BBC Light Program who have come to the pub to listen to the D-Day radio broadcast have brought the world to her instead. Caught up in the evening's festivities and the renewed hope that has been sown as a result of the Allied invasion, Sarah views nationalism as part of provincialism, that isolating force in her life, but she also views nationalism as "a way of putting it [North Wales] back in the center, of saying that what's here is important enough. It's a redrawing of the boundaries of what's worthwhile."

Despite a need to belong to something greater and more encompassing than the life she leads presently, Sarah does not forget her Welsh roots. Though she remains curious about the mysterious base under construction at the camp grounds, Sarah refrains from asking Colin about it for fear of betraying the war effort and seeming unpatriotic, for "It [i]t wouldn't do to give the English an excuse to call the Welsh unpatriotic. Only the Welsh, it occurs to her, are allowed to declare themselves that." In this regard, Sarah's view of Welsh identity is no different from her father's or that of the other farmers in The Quarryman's Arms. When Sarah's mettle is put to the test, as it is during her encounter with Colin at the pool, she falls back on the language and mores she has known throughout her life and which have preserved her sense of personal and

cultural identity. In a scene that is symbolic of historic relations between the English and Welsh, Sarah expresses herself defiantly in her native language rather than that of her oppressor□"*Nargois*!" By uttering a single word, she asserts her indomitable Welsh spirit.

Davies' use of nationalism in "Think of England" offers the reader a complex view of life in North north Wales, a life that is shaped as much by history and nationalistic pride as it is by current events. The nationalistic perspectives of both the English and the Welsh in The Quarryman's Arms affect Sarah equally, bringing her character to life in a way that is a true coming-of-age story, though in the end it is her "Welshness" that renders by far the deepest impression.

Source: David Remy, Critical Essay on "Think of England," in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Critical Essay #2

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on contemporary literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses "Think of England" in the context of the historical relations between the English and the Welsh, and the role of Welsh nationalism in the twentieth century.

In "Think of England," Davies returns to the same setting he chose for his story "A Union," which appeared in his first short story collection, *The Ugliest House in the World*. "A Union" takes place in 1899, during a bitter strike at a slate quarry in North Wales. The strike drags on for months as the ruthless employers refuse to give any ground. Hated English soldiers are called in to keep order in the town. Eventually, the union runs out of money and the men straggle back to work. This unnamed town, forty-five years later, is the setting for "Think of England." The village is still scarred by the memory of the strike. Even sixteen-year-old Sarah knows all about how for a generation families of the strikers refused to talk to families of the "scabs"men who broke the strike by going back to work. Old resentments continue to be felt in the village, even though Sarah thinks such things are silly, especially since the quarry has been in decline for years and now employs only one in five of the men in the village. Sarah has learned that only the rise of Welsh nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s kept the town from dying, by reminding the quarreling people of their common enemy, the English. This background sets the stage for the theme of the story, which is the uneasy relations between the Welsh and the English, and the continuing strong national identity of a culturally threatened people.

Davies neatly links nationalistic tensions with sexual aggression, both overt and covert. The title of the story is an ironic allusion to Queen Victoria's oft-quoted advice to those of her female subjects who were horrified at the prospect of meeting the sexual demands of their husbands: "Close your eyes and think of England." Whether knowingly or not, the young English soldier Colin alludes to the famous advice when he says to Sarah, as his sexual pursuit of her heats up, "Who says you Welsh girls don't know your duty. Proper patriot you are. Thinking of England." Patronizing, crass, unfeeling and insulting, the remark well illustrates the dominant metaphor of the story. The sexual aggression of the English menfirst the drunken, seedy Harry with his stream of offensive, sexist jokes, and then Colin, who knows what he wants from this young Welsh girl and becomes abusive when he is thwartedis a metaphor for the relations between the colonizing English and the exploited Welsh. That, at least, is how it might would be described from the point of view of the Welsh nationalists.

The subject of Welsh nationalism has never grabbed the world's headlines. When people think of conflict within the United Kingdom over the last thirty-five years, they think not of Wales but of Northern Ireland, where civil unrest has led to thousands of deaths. Nonetheless, Welsh nationalism has at times in the twentieth century been a potent force that the British government, based in London, England, has had to deal with.

Modern Welsh nationalism began in 1925, with the formation of the political party Plaid Cymru (literally, the Party of Wales), the goal of which was to educate the Welsh about their national history and culture. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Plaid Cymru became a powerful electoral force in Wales, winning several seats in the British parliament. During this period there were also hundreds of violent incidents organized by groups such as the Free Wales Army, which placed bombs in public buildings and water pipelines, and the Movement for the Defense of Wales. In 1980, Welsh nationalists set fire to many holiday homes owned by the English in Wales. These homes were unoccupied for most of the year and had an adverse effect on Welsh community life. Davies touched on this issue in his short story, "The Ugliest House in the World," in which a man who has lived for forty years in England retires to a village in North Wales only to have Welsh nationalist slogans daubed on his house.

Relations between the English and the Welsh have a long and complicated history. In 1485, the two kingdoms were united when the Welshman Henry Tudor, leading a mostly Welsh-speaking army, defeated Richard III at the battle of Bosworth to become Henry VII. As John Osmond points out in his "Introduction" to *The National Question Again: Welsh Political Identity in the 1980s*, following Henry Tudor's victory, the Welsh gentry moved to London and began to identify themselves as British rather than Welsh. Within a short period, Wales was legally incorporated into England by the Act of Union of 1536. Even the phrase "British Empire" was coined (in 1580) by a Welshman, Dr. John Dee, who was scientific advisor to Elizabeth I. Since those early days, Welshmen have often played important roles in British politics. One of the most powerful British prime ministers was the Welshman David Lloyd George, who led the nation during World War I, a war in which two-thirds of Welsh males between the ages of 20 and 40 participated (and which the Welsh nationalists in "Think of England" regard as a war of English imperialism). According to Osmond, Lloyd George "retains an immense psychological influence in Welsh politics because of the way he fused Welsh and British aspirations."

This quotation touches on the vital question: do the Welsh identify with being Welsh or with being British, or somehow with both? Osmond writes of an "ambivalence of identity that runs like a fault line through Welsh society." In surveys conducted between the 1960s and the 1980s, the majority of the Welsh population reported that they identified themselves as Welsh rather than British, although the figures fluctuated considerably. According to Osmond, most Welsh "think of themselves as both Welsh and British, in differing proportions according to the circumstances and the subject under discussion."

This kind of dual identity hovers just beneath the surface in "Think of England." Traditionally, North Wales is more thoroughgoing Welsh than the Anglicized south, and the village in the story is strongly nationalist. The native Welsh and the visiting English, who are mostly soldiers building a new military base nearby, gravitate to different rooms in the pub. They speak different languages and interpret history differently. The Welsh nationalists regard World War II, as they did World War I, as a capitalist, imperialist war fought by England. However, after Winston Churchill, the British prime minister and "voice of England," makes his announcement about D-day on the radio, such anti-English talk in the public bar, where the Welsh assemble, is for a moment stilled. Even if the staunchly Welsh locals do not confess to feeling British at that moment□a proud

moment in British history□they are at least not as militantly Welsh as usual. And young Sarah, who comes from a different Welsh generation, wonders shrewdly whether "the locals are as filled with excitement as she is, just too proud to admit it." For herself, she "yearns to be British tonight of all nights." Although Sarah, in a "half-conscious way," is proud of being Welsh, she is impatient with Welsh nationalism, which she regards as just a way the locals have of making themselves feel important, of overcoming their sense of isolation. She is quite ready to engage in a flirtation with an English soldier, even though she is aware that this might be considered a "national betrayal," and she certainly does not want to have to admit to her nationalist father that she is going out of the pub with a young Englishman.

And yet in the climax of the story, Sarah, who wants at least for one night to be British rather than Welsh, is forced back into her Welsh identity by the arrogance and aggressiveness of the English Colin. The sudden conflict that flares up between them highlights their national differences through their use of language. Although Sarah speaks English fluently, Welsh is her first language; her "schoolroom English" has been learned from textbooks. When she feels frightened by Colin's sexual advances, she lapses back into her native tongue, yelling at him in Welsh, which he does not understand. Then when she accidentally catches him on the chin as she lifts her head, he insults her by yelling an obscene English word that is unknown to her. She in turn curses him in Welsh, which prompts him to tell her, in exasperation, to speak English. At that moment Sarah recalls an incident that occurred between them the previous week. He asked her to teach him some Welsh, but then when she mocked his pronunciation, he sneered, "Ah, what's the point? Why don't you just give it up and speak English, like the rest of us?" Sarah responded with a little lecture in which she repeated the nationalist arguments she had heard about the importance of preserving the Welsh language.

This exchange shows in a nutshell a typical interaction between a dominant culture dealing with a cultural and linguistic minority. The dominant culture often fails to take the claims of the other seriously, arrogantly assuming that if the smaller group would just see reason and assimilate into the majority culture, there would be no problem. Interesting in this context is the fact that in the story, one of Harry Hitch's many anti-Welsh jokes pokes malicious fun at the Welsh language, which to unaccustomed English ears sounds strange (since it has less in common with English than either French or German) and also looks daunting on the printed page. But for the Welsh, as for many minority ethnic groups around the world, the preservation of their language is one of the keys to the survival of their distinct cultural identity. This is why twentieth century Welsh nationalists placed so much emphasis on the survival and promotion of the language. They had some notable successes, such as the Welsh Courts Act of 1942, which allowed Welsh speakers to give evidence in Welsh in court, and the Welsh Language Act of 1967, which established equal validity for Welsh with English in Wales. In spite of these efforts, however, the percentage of Welsh speakers in the population of Wales has steadily declined throughout the twentieth century. In recent decades, economic changes have led to a drift from rural communities, where Welsh was more common, to urban areas that are more thoroughly penetrated by English language and culture. There has also been a movement of English speakers into communities that

were formerly mostly Welsh-speaking. Recent surveys suggest that just under 20 percent of Welsh people are able to speak Welsh, although almost all of them are bi-lingual and may speak English far more often than they speak Welsh. Villages such as the one in "Think of England," where most people are Welsh-speakers, are becoming increasingly uncommon. Although Sarah, wanting to evade questions from Colin about the whereabouts of his bicycle, decides "she'll pretend she's forgotten her English," the reality of the twenty-first century is likely to be that more and more people will forget their Welsh.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on "Think of England," in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

Audio Editions offers *The Best American Short Stories 2001* on four cassettes or five compact discs, each story read by its author. The set, which is available at http://www.audioeditions.com (accessed November 29, 2004), contains abridged versions of prize-winning stories such as "Think of England" and features, in addition to Peter Ho Davies, such noted authors as Ha Jin, Alice Munro, Rick Moody, and Dorothy West.

Topics for Further Study

How does Davies' use of a historical event□D-Day□set the story's tone and atmosphere? How does a sense of place influence the characters' actions? Think of a story that you would like to write, about whatever topic you choose. Write the story, but place the setting during a major historical event. Did the elements of the historical event have any effect on your narrative choices or your characters' lives? How did the historical context effect affect the way you envisioned your story, especially once you began to write?

Research the Blitz. On which cities did German army focus its attacks? How many people were displaced, and where did they go once the attacks had begun? What type of support did the refugees receive, and where did it come from? Assemble this information into a visual presentation that you can share with your class, explaining the various results of your research.

The word *blitz* is the abbreviated form of what German noun? Discuss the word's derivation and meaning. What other foreign words have passed into the English language as a result of World War II?

Research the history of stone quarrying. What types of methods are used to extract the stone? Is northern Wales known for one particular type of stone, or is a variety of stone quarried in that region? For what purpose is the stone used? Does stone quarrying remain a viable industry in North Wales today?

Listen to a recording of the Welsh language being spoken. To which language group does it belong? Investigate the language's historical development. How does its pronunciation and orthography differ from English? Is Welsh spoken by a majority of the people living in Wales?

Trace the construction of Edward I's six major castles in North Wales. What similarities and differences do the castles possess? How did the design of each castle enhance its function as a fortress? Design a three-dimensional castle for an actual historical area in North Wales and describe for the class why you built the castle the way you did. This will require researching the area of North Wales in which you would have had your castle, keeping in mind elements like climate, population of people, and the proximity of enemies and what weapons they used, that may have effected the way you designed your structure in the past.

What Do I Read Next?

Peter Ho Davies' forthcoming novel *The Bad Shepherd* will be published in 2005 by Houghton Mifflin. The novel, of which "Think of England" comprises the first chapter, tells the story of Sarah (whose name has been changed to Esther during the course of the novel's composition) and a German prisoner of war who comes to work on her farm while a mysterious base is being constructed near the village. Other excerpts from the novel have been published as short stories in such publications as *Granta*, *The Paris Review*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Thus far Davies has published two short story collections: *The Ugliest House in the World* (1997) and *Equal Love* (2000). One story from the first collection, "A Union," contrasts personal beliefs with ideology as quarrymen confront their principals to take a political stance. Davies' stories are renowned for their mystery, humor, and a "bittersweet melancholia," but most of all they are marked by an abiding sense of humanity that establishes an intimate bond between author and reader.

Andrea Barrett's collection *Ship Fever and Other Stories*, which won the 1996 National Book Award for Fiction, features characters who often use science as a means of establishing relationships and finding love, though, as so many of these characters discover, the ways of the heart are not so easily measured. Writing with deft economy and resonant detail, Barrett combines historical characters with fictional ones to create worlds in which entire lifetimes are encompassed within the span of a mere few pages.

Published to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the D—Day invasion, Stephen Ambrose's book *D—Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II* (1994) provides a comprehensive history of the invasion that broke Germany's hold on Europe, comprised as it is of more than 1,400 interviews with sailors, infantrymen, paratroopers, and civilians who witnessed the landings at Normandy first-hand. The author describes in panoramic detail the personalities, political conflicts, and unexpected events that shaped this decisive moment in world history. Ambrose incorporates battlefield accounts to portray the unyielding commitment and initiative that transformed many a dog soldier into a hero.

Further Study

Morgan, Kenneth O., *Wales in British Politics, 1868—1922*, 3d ed., 1980, reprint, University of Wales Press, 1991.

Morgan, an author of more than twenty-five books on British history, explores the indifferent, if not contemptuous, attitude mid-Victorian Britain had toward the Welsh. Eventually, this attitude evolved into an intelligent, though at times slightly patronizing, understanding of Welsh nationalism, which Morgan addresses thoroughly from a political and sociological point of view.

Nixon, Barbara M., *Raiders Overhead: A Diary of the London Blitz*, rev. and enl. ed., Scolar Press, 1980.

Nixon's personal account of her duty as an air raid warden describes in detail the role she and other wardens performed in service of their fellow Britons during the Blitz. Nixon offers a view from the ground, as it were, as London prepared for the Germans' nightly attacks. What makes the book even more remarkable as a historical record is that Nixon was one of the few female wardens working in a male-dominated field.

Reynolds, Quentin, *A London Diary*, Random House, 1941.

Reynolds, a former journalist and broadcaster, offers a glimpse into the ways Londoners carried on with their everyday lives during the Blitz. Filled with amusing, enlightening anecdotes, Reynolds's diary demonstrates why so many citizens were regarded as heroes by their fellow countrymen.

Rodger, George, *The Blitz: The Photography of George Rodger*, with an introduction by Tom Hopkinson, Penguin, 1990.

Rodger, a photojournalist and founding member of Magnum Photos, captures the humanity and integrity of those who endured the onslaught of the German attacks on London. Rodger's photographs exhibit a consummate skill with the camera that never imposes distance between the photographer and his subject, thus creating scenes which appear to occur naturally because they lack artifice.

Stanier, Peter, *Quarries of England and Wales: An Historic Photographic Record*, Twelveheads Press, 1995.

Illustrated with a selection of photographs taken by the British Geographic Survey, this book documents the methods and machinery used in stone quarries during the period from 1904 to 1935. Quarrying stone is one of the oldest industries known, and Stanier's history captures the timeless quality of this endeavor whose legacy endures in architectural monuments and civic engineering projects throughout Great Britain.

Bibliography

Ambrose, Stephen E., *D—Day June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II*, Simon & Schuster, 1994, p. 501.

Bolick, Katie, "On the Sly," in *Atlantic Unbound*, December 16, 1998, http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/factfict/ff9812.htm (accessed September 16, 2004).

Carey, Jacqueline, "Ties That Grind," in the *New York Times*, March 19, 2000, p. 11.

Chamberlin, Jeremiah, "Interview with Peter Ho Davies," in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, June 23, 2004, http://www.virginia.edu/vqr/viewmedia.php/prmMID/8945 (accessed November 29, 2004).

Contemporary Authors Online, "Peter Ho Davies," in *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2003.

D'Este, Carlo, *Decision in Normandy*, E. P. Dutton, 1983, pp. 65, 107—19.

Davies, John, *A History of Wales*, Penguin, 1993, pp. 169—74, 485—93.

Davies, Peter Ho, "The Bad Shepherd," in *Ploughshares*, Vol. 29, Issue 2—3, Fall 2003, pp. 12—21.

□□□, "Contributors' Notes," in *The Best American Short Stories 2001*, edited by Barbara Kingsolver, series edited by Katrina Kenison, Houghton Mifflin, 2001, p. 347.

□□□, "The Ends," in the *Paris Review*, Vol. 162, Summer 2002, pp. 10—14.

□□□, "Leading Men," in *Granta*, No. 81, Spring 2003, pp. 194—222.

□□□, "The New Corporal," in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3, Summer 2004, pp. 90—107.

□□□, "Think of England," in *The Best American Short Stories 2001*, edited by Barbara Kingsolver, series edited by Katrina Kenison, Houghton Mifflin, 2001, pp. 62—77.

de Groot, Jerome, "Interview with Peter Ho Davies," in *Bookmunch*, http://www.bookmunch.co.uk/view.php?id=1213 (accessed November 29, 2004).

FitzGibbon, Constantine, *The Winter of the Bombs: The Story of the Blitz of London*, W. W. Norton, 1957, pp. xii—xv.

Keegan, John, *Six Armies in Normandy: From D—Day to the Liberation of Paris, June 6th—August 25th, 1944*, Viking Press, 1982, pp. 69—71.

Keen, Richard, and Ian Burgum, *Wales*, Cassell Paperbacks, 2001, p. 17.

Manchester, William, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Visions of Glory, 1874—1932*, Little, Brown, 1983, pp. 417—18, 796—99.

Morgan, Kenneth O., *Wales in British Politics, 1868—1922*, 3d ed., 1980, reprint, University of Wales Press, 1991, p. 250.

Morgan, Ted, *Churchill: Young Man in a Hurry, 1874—1915*, Simon and Schuster, 1982, pp. 284—87.

Morris, Jan, *The Matter of Wales: Epic Views of a Small Country*, with photographs by Paul Wakefield, Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 54, 66, 69—70, 165.

Osmond, John, "Introduction," in *The National Question Again: Welsh Political Identity in the 1980s*, edited by John Osmond, Gomer Press, 1985, pp. xix—xlvi.

Platt, Colin, *The Castle in Medieval England and Wales*, Barnes & Noble Books, 1996, pp. 63—75.

Rodger, George, *The Blitz: The Photography of George Rodger*, with an introduction by Tom Hopkinson, Penguin, 1990, pp. 8—11.

Ziegler, Philip, *London at War, 1939—1945*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995, pp. 150—61.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Short Stories for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

©1997-2002; ©2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Gale and Design® and Thomson Learning™ are trademarks used herein under license.

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any

form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from this product, submit your request via Web at http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

Permissions Department
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

Permissions Hotline:
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, ext. 8006
Fax: 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, The Gale Group, Inc. does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. The Gale Group, Inc. accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) 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, SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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

SSfS 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS 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 Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories 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 SSfS 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.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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:

Editor, Short Stories for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535