Titus Andronicus Study Guide

Titus Andronicus by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

Titus Andronicus is frequently linked to a kind of drama known as "revenge tragedy." In this genre, once a person vows to avenge a wrong done to him or someone in his family, there is no turning back. The cycle of revenge, filled with violent and bloody incidents, is not complete until everyone who committed the wrong or was associated with it in any way has been punished. Forgiveness is an alien concept in revenge tragedy.

Cycles of revenge continue throughout the world in the late twentieth century. One faction or ethnic group within a nation oppresses or harms another. The oppressed group strikes back or waits until it reaches a position of power, then avenges the wrongs done to its members years ago. In some countries, people are presently fighting to avenge crimes that were committed against their ancestors decades or even centuries ago.

Group solidarity, an admirable trait in itself, is one ingredient in maintaining these cycles. Family solidarity is also, in itself, a virtue. The Andronici stand shoulder to shoulder against the world. They adhere to the Roman tradition that an attack on one member of the family is an attack on everyone related to them. They have intense disputes among themselves, but once an Andronici is threatened or harmed by someone outside the family, they close ranks. Their enemies behave similarly. Tamora allows, even encourages, her sons to rape Lavinia. This is partly because Titus has, in her view, wrongly allowed the killing of Alarbus, and she knows that his daughter's rape will devastate him. It is also because she sees Lavinia not as an individual woman, but as an Andronici.

Modern societies all over the world encourage family loyalty. When one member succeeds, it's expected that his or her family will benefit as well. Siblings fight among themselves, yet if a younger brother or sister is threatened by a neighborhood bully, an older sibling is traditionally expected to intervene and protect them. This concept of family loyalty also exists in groups of non-related people, such as gangs, in which members in a sense "adopt" one another as family.

The Andronici share with their enemy Saturninus and with other Romans of this period the view that rape is a disgrace to the family. Through no fault of her own, Lavinia is personally disgraced and brings shame on her family. Traces of this attitude linger in modern societies. Rape victims frequently hesitate to report□to the police or even their own families□what has happened to them. The families of rape victims often do not feel free to talk openly about the crime, as they perhaps would if a relative had been robbed or their house had been broken into. Some progress has been made over the past few decades in removing the social stigma of rape. *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates another, even more widespread social phenomenon that continues to this day: racism. The characterization of Aaron takes advantage of cultural prejudices against people whose physical aspect is markedly different from that of the dominant population. Racism exist ed in sixteenth-century England, and it has endured throughout the twentieth, in cultures

all over the world. Moreover, the play raises disturbing questions about the traditional association of the color black with evil.

Aaron is described by literary critics as the most dynamic, fully developed character in the play. He's seen as the model□and a very strong one□for villains in Shakespeare's later plays, especially Richard III, Iago in *Othello,* and Edmund in *King Lear.* But those villains are all white men in white worlds. In *Titus Andronicus,* Aaron is thoroughly alienated from the society around him. Though Tamora, too, is "different"□a foreigner from another, despised-culture□she's given an opportunity to become part of Rome when she marries Saturninus and becomes empress. By contrast, "her raven-colored love" (II.iii.83) is forever an outcast. The play does not explicitly connect Aaron's deliberate exclusion from Roman society with his malevolent attitude. But modern readers, aware of the effects of racism and prejudice, may see a linkage there.

Plot Summary

Act I

The play is set in Rome at an unspecified time, perhaps the fourth or fifth century A.D. In a public place near the Senate House, a struggle for political power is underway between Saturninus and Bassianus, sons of the recently deceased emperor. Addressing the assembled senators and tribunes, Saturninus points out that he should succeed to the throne because he is the late emperor's first-born son. Bassianus argues that he should be the next emperor because his merits are greater than his brother's. Their debate is interrupted by the arrival of a nobleman, Marcus Andronicus, who declares that "the people of Rome" (I.i.20) have chosen his brother Titus to be the new emperor. A military procession enters with a flourish. Its most prominent figure is Titus Andronicus, whose Roman army has recently won a decisive victory over the Goths. He is accompanied by four of his sons (Martius, Mutius, Lucius, and Quintus) as well as his captives: Tamora, Queen of the Goths, her three sons (Alarbus, Demetrius, and Chiron), and her lover Aaron, a black-skinned Moor. When Lucius demands that one of Tamora's sons be sacrificed to avenge his brothers who were killed in battle against the Goths, Titus designates Alarbus. Tamora begs Titus to spare her eldest son, but he refuses, and his sons take Alarbus away. They return shortly and report that he has been hacked to pieces and disembowelled. Marcus tells Titus that a group of Romans has selected him to be the new emperor, but Titus declines the office. Instead he gives his support to Saturninus, who proposes to show his gratitude by making Titus's daughter Lavinia his wife. Titus says he is agreeable to the marriage, and Lavinia voices no protest. Bassianus, however, objects, point ing out that he and Lavinia are betrothed; he and Marcus take Lavinia away. Lucius, Quintus, and Martius follow, demonstrating their support for Bassianus, and Mutius blocks the angry Titus from going after them. In the brawl that develops, Titus kills his son Mutius.

Now scornful of Lavinia, Saturninus asks Tamora if she will marry him, and she agrees. They depart for the wedding ceremony, and everyone but Titus goes with them. When Marcus and Titus's three sons return, Titus accuses them of dishonoring him. Saturninus and Tamora return from the ceremony. Bassianus and Lavinia also reappear, and Saturninus and Bassianus argue fiercely. Tamora urges her new husband to grant pardons to everyone, assuring him in a whispered aside that before long they will have their revenge on Bassianus and the Andronici. Saturninus publicly forgives those who have opposed him, and every one departs, making plans to hunt in the forest together the following morning.

Act II

Aaron enters after the others have left. He talks aloud to himself about how he means to manipulate Tamora's love for him and use her new power as Saturninus's wife to his own advantage. Demetrius and Chiron suddenly appear, arguing heatedly about

Lavinia, whom they both desire. Aaron stops them when they draw their swords against each other. He proposes that they seize the opportunity of the hunting party, when the women of the court will be walking alone in the forest, to abduct and rape Lavinia. Demetrius and Chiron agree to the scheme. Near the emperor's palace, the sounds of horns and baying dogs signal the start of the hunt, and members of the hunting party gather. Deep within a nearby forest, Aaron conceals a bag of gold beneath an elder tree. Tamora appears, and Aaron gives her a letter he's forged, telling her to make sure that Saturninus sees it. Noticing Bassianus and Lavinia approaching, Aaron tells Tamora to provoke Bassianus into a quarrel, then he leaves to find Tamora's sons. When Demetrius and Chiron arrive, Tamora tells them that Bassianus and Lavinia lured her to that spot, intending to tie her to a tree and leave her to die or go mad. Demetrius and Chiron stab Bassianus to death and throw his body into a deep pit. Then they drag Lavinia away. Tamora goes off in search of Aaron, who appears from another direction with Martius and Quintus. Martius stumbles and falls into the pit containing Bassianus's corpse. Aaron leaves to find Saturninus, intending to frame Martius and Quintus for the murder of Bassianus. Quintus tries to pull his brother out of the hole, but instead he's drawn down into it by Martius's weight. Aaron returns with Saturninus, and Martius□trapped at the bottom of the pit□informs the emperor that Bassianus has been killed. Tamora, Titus, and Lucius arrive, and Tamora gives Saturninus the forged letter□allegedly a note from Martius and Quintus to an accomplice, informing him where to find his reward for murdering Bassianus. Aaron retrieves the sack of gold he had hidden earlier and shows it to Saturninus. The emperor orders that Martius and Quintus be imprisoned. Everyone returns to Rome, with Martius and Quintus under guard. Lavinia enters the clearing, bleeding from her mouth and wrists. To keep her from revealing that they raped her, Demetrius and Chiron have cut off her hands and cut out her tongue. They taunt her and make cruel jokes, then leave her alone in the forest. Her uncle Marcus comes upon her and is shocked and horrified at the specter of his mutilated niece. He tenderly escorts her back to Rome.

Act III

On a street in Rome, Quintus and Martius are led in chains by judges, tribunes and senators taking them to be executed. Titus begs them to spare his son's lives, but they pass on with their prisoners. Lucius arrives and reports that because he drew his sword and tried to rescue his brothers, he has been banished from Rome. Marcus and Lavinia appear. Lucius is horror-struck by the sight of his sister, and Titus almost goes mad with grief and pity. Aaron arrives and says that if one of them will chop off a hand and send it to Saturninus, Quintus and Martius will not be executed. Titus tells Lucius and Marcus to decide between themselves which one will make this sacrifice, and the two of them go off to find an axe. As soon as they are gone, however, Titus turns to Aaron and asks him to chop off one of his hands. Aaron carries out the deed before Lucius and Mar cus return. As he leaves, Aaron reveals in an aside to the audience that this has all been a deception: Quintus and Martius will be executed. Within moments a messenger appears, bearing back Titus's hand□along with the heads of his two sons. Titus responds with mad laughter. He vows that he will not rest until he has avenged his slain sons and ravished daughter. He takes up one head, asks Marcus to bring the other, and

tells Lavinia to carry away his severed hand between her teeth. After they leave, Lucius declares his intention to go to the Goths and recruit an army to attack Rome and Saturninus.

Act IV

In Titus's house, Lavinia has been following young Lucius everywhere. Marcus and Titus realize that she wants one of the books the boy carries about with him: Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* When they give it to her, she turns the pages furiously until she comes to the story of Philomela, who was raped and had her tongue cut out by her brother-in-law Tereus. Marcus guides her to a place where sand is strewn on the floor and shows her how to write in the sand with a stick. Grasping the stick in her mouth and guiding it with her stumps, Lavinia is able to name her attackers by writing *"Stuprum* [rape]. Chiron. Demetrius" (IV.i.78).

Titus begins to plan his vengeance. He sends young Lucius to the palace with a veiled message: weapons inscribed with verses. When the boy delivers these to Demetrius and Chiron, they fail to grasp the significance of Titus's gifts. Aaron, however, realizes this means that Titus has discovered who raped his daughter. The sound of trumpets is heard, heralding the birth of a child to Tamora. A nurse enters the room carrying a dark-skinned infant who is clearly the son of Aaron, not Saturninus. The nurse tells Aaron that Tamora wants him to kill the baby. Demetrius and Chiron say they'll gladly do it, but Aaron sweeps the child into his arms and draws his sword, swearing that no one will harm his son. Demetrius and Chiron ask Aaron what should be done. His first response is to stab the nurse to death so she cannot tell anyone else about the baby. He then sends Demetrius and Chiron to bribe a couple into giving up their newborn son, a fair-skinned child, as a substitute for Aaron's. The Moor leaves Rome, taking his infant son with him.

In a public place in the city, Titus distributes arrows, with notes attached to them, to Marcus, young Lucius, and several others of his kinsmen. He explains that the notes are petitions to the gods, seeking justice. Believing that he's out of his mind, Titus's relatives nevertheless draw their bows and send the arrows aloft. A half-witted countryman passes by on his way to the palace, with two pigeons in a basket under his arm. Titus inserts into the basket a knife wrapped in a piece of paper on which he's written a speech accusing Saturninus of mur der. Titus instructs the man to give the basket directly to the emperor.

Within the palace, an enraged Saturninus shows Tamora and her sons the arrows and petitions for justice that have landed inside the palace walls. The countryman enters with his basket and presents it to Saturninus, who reads the speech and orders that the man be taken away and killed. A nobleman named Aemilius arrives with news that an army of Goths, led by Lucius, is marching on Rome. Tamora says she has a scheme for persuading Titus to help avert the attack.

Act V

On an open field near Rome, Lucius tells his new allies, the Goths, that the Romans are on the verge of rebelling against Saturninus. Another Goth enters, bringing Aaron and the baby, who have been discovered near the encampment. To prevent Lucius from hanging him and his child, Aaron reveals everything he's done. Aemilius arrives with a message from Saturninus, proposing a peace talk, and Lucius agrees to the proposal.

In the courtyard of Titus's house, Tamora and her sons appear in disguise. She tells Titus that she is Revenge, come to help him destroy his enemies. Titus remarks that the two men with her appear to be Rape and Murder. Tamora asks Titus to invite Lucius to his house, where the emperor and empress will admit their wrongs and beg for mercy, and Titus agrees to do so. As Tamora is about to leave, Titus insists that the figures dressed as Rape and Murder remain with him□remarking in an aside to the audience that he's aware of their true identities. After Tamora has gone, Titus calls to his kinsmen and tells them to tie up Demetrius and Chiron. He then leads in Lavinia, and while he cuts the throats of the men who raped her, she catches their blood in a basin held in her mouth.

Sometime later, Lucius, Marcus, and the Goths arrive at Titus's house with Aaron, who is bound in chains and taken away. Saturninus, Tamora, Aemilius, and several tribunes arrive shortly thereafter, and Marcus invites them all to be seated. Titus enters and places in front of Tamora and Saturninus a meat pie he has prepared for them. They do not know that the pastry contains the blood and ground-up bones of Demetrius and Chiron. Titus then asks Saturninus whether he thinks a father would be justified in killing his daughter if she were raped. Saturninus says that would be the only way for a father to erase his daughter's shame and ease his own sorrow. At once, Titus stabs Lavinia. He reveals that she was raped by Demetrius and Chiron, and when Saturninus demands that they be brought before him, -Titus replies: "Why, there they are, both baked in this pie; / Whereof their mother daintily hath fed" (V.i.ii.60- 61). In rapid succession, Titus kills Tamora, Saturninus kills Titus, and Lucius kills Saturninus. Marcus and Lucius address the tribunes who have witnessed the bloodbath, detailing the crimes against the Andronicus family and urging the tribunes to reunite Rome. Aemilius proclaims his support for Lucius as the next emperor, and the other tribunes add their voices to his in hailing Lucius as Rome's new leader. An unrepentant Aaron is brought in, and Lucius orders that he be buried in the ground up to his chest and left to die. He further commands that Tamora's body be set out in the open for birds and beasts to devour.

Characters

Aaron:

Often referred to as the Moor, he is a dark -skinned adventurer and mercenary soldier who fought with the Goths against Rome. He is Tamora's lover, and one of the captives Titus leads into Rome in Li. Aaron is also the chief villain of the play. As a dramatic character, he has a richly complex and ambiguous appeal.

On the one hand, he is the embodiment of evil. At II.iii.39, he tells Tamora, "Blood and revenge are hammering in my head." Yet we are not shown or told of any specific injury or injustice that he has suffered from the Andronici□except, in the course of war, to be defeated and captured. He seems inclined to villainy by his very nature: he *is* evil, and he *does* evil. He shows no pity or remorse. He proudly acknowledges that he has done "a thousand dreadful things" and regrets that he "cannot do ten thousand more" (V.i.124, 144). Deeply cynical, he scorns honest men. He has no moral code, and he mocks those who do.

On the other hand, he is a very engaging figure. His self-confidence' is expressed nonchalantly, so that the audience is attracted rather than put off by his self-assurance. He is generally cheerful and open in his soliloquies and when he addresses the audience directly. It is as if he were coaxing us into sharing his sardonic perspective on events. His playfulness and sheer vitality sometimes put the audience at risk of forgetting the horrors he has brought about.

Aaron keeps the audience informed of his schemes and their implications, either through dialogue with Tamora and her sons or by direct address. He orchestrates nearly all the events that occur in Act II: Bassianus's murder, Lavinia's rape, the planting of "evidence," and the entrapment□literally and figuratively□of Quintus and Marcus. He sees to it that various characters get to the clearing in the forest at just the right time to advance his schemes. A master of strategy and manipulation, Aaron is also capable of on-the-spot decision making. Clearly as surprised as anyone when Tamora's baby turns out to be his son rather than Saturninus's, he acts quickly to save the infant's life and protect Tamora. He stabs the nurse, lays out a detailed plan for substituting another baby for his own, tells Demetrius and Chiron where to dispose of the nurse's body, instructs them to send the midwife to him so he can kill her, too, and then charts a future life for his son and himself. All this happens within the space of a few moments. Ingenious as he is, Aaron isn't entirely self-sufficient. From time to time, he requires the assist ance or cooperation of Tamora and her sons to carry out his schemes. He boasts of his sexual power over her, and she appears to be as desirous of him as he claims she is. However, though they are lovers, there is no indication that he is in love with her. Yet Aaron does have the capacity to care for another human being. His devotion to his son is clear. He willingly casts aside his role as Tamora's lover, with all the privileges that gives him, to leave Rome and seek safety for his child. When he tells Lucius in V.i that he's prepared to reveal all the wrongs committed against the Andronici, he makes

this offer in exchange for his son's life, not his own. His commitment to the survival of the infant unexpectedly shows his humanity. He soothes the child, at IV.ii.176-81, with a kind of fierce tenderness. The comparison between Aaron as the devoted father and Aaron the man who derives malicious joy from inflicting pain on others could hardly be more startling. As he catalogues his sins to Lucius in V.i, he takes pleasure in dwelling on his success in deceiving Titus into cutting off a hand in exchange for the lives of Quintus and Martius. "And when I had done it," Aaron says, "[I] drew myself apart, / And almost broke my heart with extreme laughter" (V.i.112-13). Upon witnessing Titus's reaction to the sight of Quintus and Martius's heads, the Moor continues, he laughed so hard he cried□and then he went to Tamora and shared the joke with her. Aaron is defiant to the end. In the play's final scenes, far from showing remorse, he says that he regrets nothing. Even at the prospect of being set "breast-deep in earth" (V.iii.179) and left to starve to death, Aaron is as contemptuous of other people's opinions as ever, and he refuses to show any self-pity. Aaron's final words represent a stark challenge to traditional morality: "If one good deed in all my life I did, /1 do repent it from my very soul" (V.iii. 188-89).

Aemilius:

He is a nobleman and tribune who acts first as a messenger for Saturninus and then as a supporter of Lucius in the play's final scene. In IV.iv, Aemilius reports to the emperor that the Goths, under the leadership of Lucius, are marching on Rome. Saturninus asks him to take a message to Lucius proposing a peaceful meeting at Titus's house. He does so in V.i. Aemilius arrives for the feast at Titus's house in the company of Saturninus and Tamora, but at the close of the play, with Saturninus dead, he proposes that Lucius be the next emperor, noting that Lucius appears to be the choice of Rome's citizens.

Alarbus:

He is a Goth, the oldest of Tamora's three sons. In Li, Titus orders that Alarbus be sacrificed so that the spirits of Titus's sons who were killed in the war against the Goths will rest in peace and honor. Tamora pleads with Titus to spare her son's life, but Alarbus is killed. Thereafter Tamora is obsessed with avenging his death.

Andronicus (Marcus Andronicus):

Unlike his brother Titus, he is a tribune, not a soldier. He represents the voice of the Roman people, or at least some faction of the populace, when he nominates his brother for emperor early in Act I. Overall, he is presented as a reasonable, unheroic man, who frequently attempts to persuade his more strong-willed brother to moderate his behavior. Marcus is, however, as committed to family honor as Titus. He often takes on the role of explaining or defending the conduct of the Andronici. But there is some question about whether, in his extended speeches to the other tribunes at the close of

the tragedy (V.iii.67-95, 119-36), he may be trying to shift the blame from his family onto others. As many commentators have noted, Marcus is often long-winded. His lengthy speech when he comes upon the raped and mutilated Lavinia in the forest has been the subject of a great deal of debate and commentary. Full of classical allusions and in a mood that can be described as aloof or emotionless, this speech is difficult for modern readers or audiences, who might think Marcus ought to be searching for a physician to bind up Lavinia's wounds instead of delivering a nostalgic oration. It has been suggested that Marcus uses elevated, formal language here to create an aura of tragedy around his disfigured niece. He is, in effect, memorializing her, emphasizing who she was rather than what she has become. He clearly regards her with pity and com passion, and continues to treat her gently throughout the remainder of the play.

Marcus demonstrates a similar compassion for his grief-stricken brother, humoring his fantasies and assisting his schemes for revenge. In the so -called "fly scene" (III.ii), Marcus recognizes that his brother Titus is on the brink of madness. When Titus becomes enraged and calls him a murderer because he swatted a fly, Marcus says he did it because the fly resembled Aaron; Titus calms down and praises Marcus for the deed. Together they help Lavinia find a way to reveal the identities of the men who raped her. And, with sorrow, Marcus indulges his brother's delusion of sending aloft petitions for divine justice wrapped around arrows.

Marcus is not present when Demetrius and Chiron are killed. It isn't clear whether he knows what Titus has in store for the guests at the banquet. After the multiple murders, Marcus defends his family before the assembled tribunes, sharing the role of interpreter of events with his nephew Lucius. Titus endured more than "any living man could bear" (V.iii.127), Marcus argues, and the crimes committed against the Andronicis were unspeakable. If the tribunes judge that what the Andronici have done is wrong, Marcus says, he and Lucius will kill themselves. The tribunes respond by naming Lucius emperor.

Andronicus (Titus Andronicus):

A proud veteran of forty years' of military campaigns against the enemies of Rome, he is a popular hero. At the beginning of Act I, he is the people's choice to be their next emperor. But Titus is a highly contradictory figure. By the close of that act, he has betrayed his integrity through false pride, harsh inflexibility, and faulty judgment. On the; other hand, by the end of Act III, he has suffered more unspeakable wrongs than "any living man could bear" (V.iii. 127). Pursuing his revenge against those who have violated his daughter, murdered his son-in-law, and executed his sons, Titus becomes steeped in blood. It's questionable, however, whether he ever reflects on his own role in turning Rome into "a wilderness of tigers" (III.i.54).

Titus's first error is to agree to the ritual murder of Alarbus. He stubbornly refuses to be persuaded by either the logic or the emotionalism of Tamora's appeal on behalf of her son. He chooses rigid adherence to Roman tradition□a sacrifice to appease the spirits of dead warriors□rather than the nobler virtue of mercy. Next he rejects the opportunity

to become emperor. Titus describes himself as an old man, weary and exhausted. He predicts that if he were to assume office one day, he might have to resign it the next. He throws his political support behind the candidacy of Saturninus, failing to recognize how disastrous this choice will be for Rome.

Without consulting his daughter Lavinia, he agrees to Saturninus's suggestion that she be his wife. Having given his word on this, Titus is astounded when his brother and sons do not accept his decision. Disregarding Lavinia's legal betrothal to Bassianus, and seeming not at all concerned with her personal wishes, Titus is only focused on what he sees as a challenge to his authority in the family. He emphasizes the integrity of his promise to Saturninus over the lawful oath sworn between Bassianus and Lavinia. Enraged by what he regards as treachery, Titus kills his son Mutius for daring to block his pursuit of the young couple and their defenders. When Marcus and Lucius point out how wrong he was to slay his son, Titus angrily says that no true son would ever dishonor his father as Mutius did. Titus is so furious that he bars his brother and sons from burying Mutius in the family tomb, and only grudgingly relents when they fall on their knees and beg him to change his mind. By the end of Act I, Titus has committed offenses against his family, the laws of Rome, and divine principles of justice and mercy.

In the course of Act II, Titus's son-in-law Bassianus is murdered, Lavinia is raped and mutilated, and Titus's sons Martius and Quintus have been falsely charged with murder. Saturninus rejects Titus's appeal to delay passing judgment on them, and at the beginning of Act III, Quintus and Martius are being led to their execution. Titus desperately reminds the officials taking them away of his many years of service to Rome. He prostrates himself on the pavement, weeping helplessly, but his prayers for justice go unanswered. The next blow comes shortly after this one. Marcus appears with the wretched and disfigured Lavinia. Titus is distraught. In a passionate and moving speech beginning "For now I stand as one upon a rock / Environ'd with a wilderness of sea" (III.i.93-94), he contemplates the tide of suffering that threatens to overwhelm him. He is inconsolable, despite Lucius and Marcus's efforts to stop his weeping. He takes heart when Aaron appears and, deceptively, offers him a way to save Quintus and Martius. But after Aaron departs with his prize of Titus's hand, Titus renews his laments, despite Marcus's urging that he should rein in his grief. At this point, a messenger appears from Saturninus, with Titus's futilely sacrificed hand and the heads of his two sons. "Now is a time to storm," says Marcus (III.i.263), but Titus is through with tears. He assumes command of the remnants of his family and sets out on a course of revenge.

Many commentators on the play believe that Titus becomes morally corrupted as he carries out his schemes' for revenge. It's debatable whether he is also driven mad, by his sufferings or by his obsession with vengeance. In III.ii, he goes into a" frenzy when Marcus swats a fly. Nearly hysterical, he calls his brother a murderer. In IV.iii, he urges his kinsmen to scour the seas and "pierce the inmost center of the earth" (IV.iii.12) in search of the goddess Justice, who has fled the world. When his nephew Publius, humoring Titus, tells him that he's heard from the god Pluto that Justice is with "Jove in heaven, or somewhere else" (IV.iii.40), Titus wraps arrows with petitions to the gods and directs his kinsmen to send them skyward. Sometimes his lunacy is feigned, as in V.ii,

when Tamora and her sons come to his house in disguise. He toys with them and turns Tamora's intention to use *him* into the crowning moment of his own revenge against *her.*

He carries out the final stages of his vengeance with a mixture of playfulness, guile, and cold -bloodedness. He orders Lavinia to hold a basin in her teeth to catch the blood of Tamora's sons when he slits their throats. Before he kills them, he vividly describes to Chiron and Demetrius what he means to do with their bodies. He greets his banquet guests dressed "like a cook" (V.iii.25), for he has indeed prepared the meal himself. When Tamora has eaten some of the pastry, Titus takes grim pleasure in telling her what she's just consumed. And then he kills her.

Modern readers and audiences may see the death of Lavinia as cruel or unnecessary. Titus's motives for stabbing her appear to be grounded in the tradition of his time and his country. With his reference to the tale of Virginius, he both justifies and foreshadows what he is about to do. Whether he does it tenderly, in effect delivering her from further suffering, or in obedience to what he thinks is appropriate to Roman tradition, is up to the reader□ or to the performer who enacts the extraordinary role of Titus□to decide.

Bassianus:

He and Saturninus are the' sons of the late emperor of Rome, and the play opens with Bassianus challenging his older brother's right to succeed to the throne. Later in the first scene he challenges Titus's decision to disregard Bassianus's betrothal to Lavinia. Yet he is more gracious than defiant in both of these instances. And, unlike most of the other characters in this play, he bears no grudge against the person who wronged him. Indeed, he defends Titus and speaks on his behalf when Titus falls into disfavor with Saturninus. Bassianus's graciousness deserts him, however, when he is provoked by Tamora into a verbal brawl in II.iii. She uses their heated exchange as the basis for convincing her sons that Bassianus and Lavinia are tormenting her. Though Bassianus is not responsible for what happens to him and his wife, his naivete makes it easy for Aaron and Tamora to manipulate him.

Boy (young Lucius):

He is the son of Lucius and the grandson of Titus Andronicus. In III.ii, he is a witness to Titus's demented response when Marcus kills a fly. In IV.i, he reports that his aunt Lavinia follows him everywhere and that her behavior frightens him. When Titus and Marcus calm him down, he says he knows his aunt loves him, and he apologizes to her. After Lavinia manages to communicate the names of her attackers, young Lucius vows that if he "were a man" he would drive a "dagger in their bosoms" (IV.i.107, 118). Titus gives him a role in revenging Lavinia, and he carries it out well. He delivers the weapons with cryptic messages written on them to Chiron and Demetrius, concealing his true feelings toward the men under a facade of good manners. With other males in his family, young Lucius helps Titus launch petitions for divine justice, earning his grandfather's praise.

Caius:

A kinsman of Titus, he's among the men who shoot arrows and messages in the direction of the emperor's palace in IV.iii. Caius is also one of the Andronici who help tie up Chiron and Demetrius in V.ii. He does not speak on either occasion.

Captain:

A Roman military officer, he announces the triumphant return of Titus Andronicus, "Rome's best champion" (I.i.65).

Child:

He is the infant son of Tamora, who orders him killed, and Aaron, who saves his life. Aaron leaves Rome with the baby, intending to raise him among the Goths, but they are both captured and returned to Rome. Near the close of the play, the child appears in Titus's house in the arms of an attendant. Though Aaron is condemned to death, nothing is said about the fate of his son.

Chiron:

He and Demetrius are Tamora's sons. Like his brother, Chiron is selfish and cruel, guilty of unspeakable crimes and utterly without remorse. After they rape and mutilate Lavinia, they humiliate her further by mocking the very wounds they inflicted on her. Chiron seems to have had some formal education, for he recognizes that the verses Titus sends with the weapons in IV.ii are from a poem by Horace. However, he doesn't realize the significance of the words: Titus now knows who raped Lavinia. Because of their limited intelligence, as well as their inclination toward evil, Chiron and Demetrius are easily duped by Aaron and Tamora, who have no qualms about using them to carry out their own schemes. Chiron and his brother accompany Tamora to Titus's house in V.ii and willingly remain there, as Titus requests, when she leaves. Smug in the belief that Titus is a demented old man, none of them suspects the fate that awaits the brothers at Titus's hands.

Clown:

An illiterate and dim-witted peasant, he is on his way to the palace with two pigeons in a basket when he is intercepted by Titus. He's confused when Titus asks him if he's a messenger from Jupiter, sent in response to Titus's petitions for divine justice. Slipping a knife wrapped in a written accusation of murder into the man's basket, Titus tells the clown to give the basket to Saturninus and "then look for your reward" (IV.iii.112). The unsuspecting clown follows Titus's instructions, and he is hanged.

Demetrius:

He and Chiron are Tamora's sons. Like his brother, Demetrius is brutal and vicious, capable of unbelievable savagery yet insensible to the enormi ty of his crimes. Far from showing any remorse over the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, they make cruel jokes at her expense before leaving her alone in the forest. No brighter than his brother, Demetrius is easily persuaded by Tamora that she has been threatened by Bassianus, and he kills Bassianus without hesitation. His disposition toward violent, unthinking action is evident again in IV.ii, when he sees Tamora's newborn son. Demetrius calls Aaron a villain and a foul fiend for disgracing Tamora, and he is ready in a moment to murder the infant. Instead, he and Chiron follow the Moor's advice and carry out his instructions about substituting another baby. Demetrius and Chiron's fate□to spend the last moments of their lives bound and gagged, forced to listen to Titus as he describes how he will transform their blood and brains and groundup bones into the contents of a pastry and serve it to their mother□evokes horror, but little if any pity for them.

Goths:

Rome's defeated enemies at the beginning of the play, they later accept Lucius as their military commander and prepare to attack Rome with him at the head of their army. When Lucius attends the banquet at Titus's house in V.iii, several Goths accompany him. Historically, the Goths were a northern European people who attacked and overran Rome in 410 A.D.

Judges:

In III.i, they are part of a procession of Roman officials leading Quintus and Martius to the place where the brothers are to be executed. Titus tries to interrupt their progress, begging for pity on his sons. He reminds the officials of the service he has given to Rome, but they are not moved by his appeal.

Lavinia:

The only daughter of Titus Andronicus, she becomes a victim of the cycle of revenge that engulfs virtually everyone in Rome, the innocent as well as the guilty. Lavinia is generally a submissive figure. She is willing to marry Saturninus if that is what her father wants, even though she's betrothed to Bassianus. Aside from a formal speech welcoming her father back to Rome (I.i. 157-64), she is rarely heard from in Act I. But at her husband's side in II.iii, Lavinia speaks boldly and haughtily to Tamora. The empress makes Lavinia pay for those words, rejecting her subsequent appeals for "a woman's pity" (II.iii. 147) or at least a merciful death rather than rape. Lavinia's last words, as Chiron and Demetrius drag her off to rape her and cut off her tongue and hands, condemn Tamora as a traitor to women.

From that time forward, she cannot speak. Yet her very appearance is a powerful symbol of the viciousness that has swept Rome. The first sight of her mutilated body almost causes her brother Lucius to faint. She is a constant reminder to her father and her' other relatives of the necessity for revenge. Her rape represents a violation of family honor. In effect, it is a political act, for it is a symbol of a disordered society as well as grisly testimony to the fact that Rome has become a place of chaotic violence. Titus and Saturninus adhere to their cul tural tradition and apparently share the conventional interpretation of the story of Virginius□an ancient Roman who killed his daughter after she was raped. For these men, rape disgraces the victim and dishonors her family.

Before Titus kills Lavinia, he makes her a party to his revenge. He instructs her to hold the basin between her teeth and catch the blood which flows from the slit throats of Demetrius and Chiron. She enters the banquet room alongside Titus and observes Tamora eating the pastry containing the minced remains of Tamora's sons, Lavinia's rapists. Most commentators believe she's aware that her father means to kill her when their revenge is complete. But it requires an actor on stage, representing Lavinia, to interpret her feelings about this.

No witnesses report her response as her father approaches her with his knife drawn, and she cannot say for herself with what emotions she anticipates death.

Lucius:

One of Titus's twenty-five sons, he is the only one who outlives his father. His survival may be viewed as the result of chance or fortunate circum stances. It may also be seen as the result of Lucius's own ambitions and his carefully planned strategies. A forceful figure, Lucius frequently takes the initiative in preserving his family's honor. He is the one who asks Titus to yield up "the proudest prisoner of the Goths" (I.i.96) to appease the spirits of his brothers who were killed in the war. Lucius is also the first of Lavinia's brothers to defend Bassianus's lawful betrothal to her and the first to accuse Titus of being unjust when he kills Mutius. Lucius is not a disobedient son, however. When he stands up against his father, it's for the purpose of defending Roman ideals and principles□in these instances and again when he objects to Titus's order that Mutius's body not be given a proper burial in the family tomb. He demonstrates pity and compassion for Lavinia and for his grief-stricken father, both when Titus is confronted by the specter of his mutilated daughter and when Titus' s efforts to save the lives of Quintus and Martius prove futile. Lucius himself tries to rescue his brothers from execution, and for this act he is banished from Rome. However, he takes advantage of his forced exile to revenge his family, gathering an army of Goths and leading them against Rome.

Lucius's desire for vengeance is evident in V.i, when Aaron and his infant son are captured near the Goths' encampment. At the sight of the man who tricked Titus into cutting off his hand, Lucius goes into a rage. He orders the soldiers to hang the infant before his father's eyes so that the Moor will suffer doubly before he himself is hanged. To save the child, Aaron promises he'll reveal all the wrongs that he and Tamora and her

sons committed against the Andronici, if Lucius will let the child live. "Even by my god I swear to thee I will," replies Lucius (V.i.86). The baby is still alive when Marcus uses it□in the presence of the tribunes at V.iii. 119□as evidence of Tamora's adulterous relationship with Aaron. But some commentators question wheth er Lucius truly intends to keep the vow he swore to its father. Some of this skepticism arises from Lucius's extended speech to the tribunes (V.iii.96-118), where he mixes indictments of Chiron and Demetrius with an account of himself as Rome's most ardent defender. He denies that he is calling undue attention to himself and declares that when no one else speaks for them, men are inclined to praise themselves. Shortly after that, Aemilius nominates Lucius to be the next emperor, and the assembled tribunes endorse him as well. It's debatable whether Lucius's reign will usher in a new Rome or whether the state will remain "a wilderness of tigers" (III.i.54).

Marcus Andronicus:

See Andronicus

Martins:

One of Titus's sons, his bravery and family loyalty are no match for Aaron's craftiness. With his brothers, Martius comes to the aid of Lavinia and Bassianus in I.i, thus earning his father's fury. When Titus refuses to allow the body of Mutius, another of his sons, to be buried in the family tomb, Martius boldly confronts his father and says he's willing to die to defend Mutius' s honor. But Martius is duped by Aaron, who leads him and Quintus into the forest, places them in a compromising position, and implicates them in the murder of Bassianus. Saturninus orders that they be executed, and a messenger delivers their heads to Titus in III.i.

Messenger:

He appears in Ill.i, bringing Titus the severed heads of Quintus and Martius, together with the hand Titus had cut off in the belief that the lives of his two sons would thereby be spared. The messenger expresses pity for Titus and contempt for those who have mocked him.

Mutius:

One of Titus's sons, he defends Bassianus's right to marry Lavinia. This infuriates Titus, who had agreed she would marry Saturninus. When Lavinia and Bassianus flee the court in I.i, Mutius prevents Titus from going after them. In the brawl that follows, Titus kills Mutius.

Nurse:

She attends the delivery of Tamora's son and brings him to Aaron with instructions that the empress wants the child to be killed. Aaron kills the nurse instead, to prevent her from telling anyone else that the child is his, not Saturninus's.

Publius:

The son of Marcus Andronicus, he appears in IV.iii and V.ii. When his father laments that Titus's scheme to send petitions for justice to the gods is a sign of madness, Publius responds that Titus should be treated with kindness and indulgence. He is the spokesman for the various Andronici who appear when Titus calls for help in tying up Demetrius and Chiron before they are killed.

Quintus:

One of Titus's sons, he survives the war against the Goths, but not the cruelty of Aaron. In I.i, he defends Bassianus's right to marry Lavinia and thereby incurs his father's wrath. Saturninus later pardons Quintus and the other Adronici for helping Bassianus and Lavinia, and Quintus is a member of the hunting party that leaves Rome for a nearby forest in II.ii. During the hunt, Aaron leads Quintus and his brother Martius to the pit where Bassianus's corpse lies. Aaron runs off when Martius tumbles into the pit, and Quintus falls into the hole while trying to pull his brother out. Through a forged letter and a sack of gold he has planted as supposed evidence of their crime, Aaron frames Quintus and Martius for the murder of Bassianus. They are executed, and their heads are brought to Timon in III.i.

Saturninus:

He and Bassianus are the sons of the late emperor of Rome. With Titus's support, Saturninus succeeds to his father's throne. Saturninus is vain, quick-tempered, and headstrong. He often acts rashly and frequently shows poor judgment. His weaknesses are exploited by Tamora and Aaron, and their influence over him grows during the course of the play. He seems unaware that they are lovers and continues to rely on Tamora's advice about matters of state. Saturninus may be as much a victim of Aaron's trickery as are Titus and his sons.

Saturninus's hatred of the Andronici makes it easier for Aaron to convince him that Quintus and Marcius are guilty of Bassianus's murder. However, the execution of Titus's sons is clearly a perversion of justice. Most commentators do not regard Saturninus as a figure of unqualified evil like Aaron and Tamora. But through a combination of their manipulation and his own weakness, Saturninus contributes significantly to the political and moral degeneration of Rome.

Sempronius:

A kinsman of Titus, he joins other members of the Andronicus family in shooting message-laden arrows in the direction of the emperor's palace. Titus addresses him at IV.iii.10, so it's evident that Sempronius is present, but he does not speak.

Senators:

In I.i, several senators gather to hear Saturninus and Bassianus argue their competing claims to be Rome's next emperor. The senators have no part in choosing a new ruler, for Titus ensures Saturninus's succession by giving him his support. In III.i, some senators are part of a group of Roman officials who lead Quintus and Martius to their executions. Like the other officials, these senators are deaf to Titus's appeal for mercy.

Tamora:

As queen of the Goths, a people who have been at war with Rome for many years, she is an enemy of Rome. As a captive led through the streets of the capital, she suffers public humiliation. Tamora hates Titus and his sons even before her own son Alarbus is brutally killed as a sacrifice to the dead Andronici. Alarbus's death does, however, set in motion her schemes for revenge. It may also be seen as some justification for what she does. But she doesn't limit her vengefulness to Titus and his sons. She allows her own sons Demetrius and Chiron to rape Lavinia, refusing to be swayed by Lavinia's appeals to her womanly feelings. Tamora says she can be as pitiless as Titus when he remained unmoved by her tears and pleas on behalf of Alarbus.

Tamora's appeal to Titus in I.i is heartfelt and poignant. She speaks to him as one loving parent to another. She reminds him that Alarbus and his brothers fought valiantly "in their country' s cause" just as Titus's sons did, and to be "slaughtered in the streets" is a fate no soldier deserves (I.i.113, 112). This speech, which concludes by pointing out that mercy is the truest sign of a noble nature, demonstrates a different Tamora than is usually evident. Or perhaps she is being manipulative here. Another speech (II.iii. 10-29) provides a glimpse of her sensitivity to the natural world. Tamora seems at home in the forest, attuned to the cheerful and soothing sounds of Nature. She is, of course, suggesting in this speech that she and Aaron should use this opportunity of being alone in the woods to make love. The lyrical tone in which she couches her suggestion conveys a sense of Tamora at ease with the world and relishing its natural pleasures.

Such expressions of humanity are rare in Tamora. Elevated to empress of Rome when she marries Saturninus, she will seemingly do anything to hold onto her powerful position. Confined to her bed after childbirth, she sends Aaron instructions to kill the child so that she will not be disgraced□or killed□when Saturninus sees it and realizes it's not his child. The motherly feelings she expressed so eloquently on behalf of Alabarbus are nowhere in evidence now. She enjoys wielding power through her husband, and she's adept at manipulating him. She urges caution when he would do

something rash and recommends delayed revenge when he wants immediate punishment of an enemy. Saturninus generally follows her counsel, recognizing her su perior judgment and experience as a ruler (the play represents her as several years older than he is). On one fateful occasion, Demetrius and Chiron, who are generally led by her, disregard her advice; they fail to kill Lavinia after they have raped her. Lavinia survives and, as Tamora had warned, eventually incriminates her attackers.

Tamora's judgment about people isn't infalli ble, however. In V.ii, when she costumes herself as Revenge in order to enlist Titus's help in preventing Lucius and the Goths from advancing against Rome, she miscalculates. She regards Titus as a harmless lunatic, and she agrees to leave her sons with him. When Tamora and Saturninus return to Titus's house for the banquet, she anticipates the occasion will lead to a peace settlement with Lucius. Like a gracious guest, she eats some of the pastry her host sets before her. She has only a moment to react between the time Titus reveals that she's just consumed her sons who have been ground up and baked in a pie, and the instant he kills her. If her thoughts at that moment were expressible, there is nothing in the text to suggest what they might be.

Titus Andronicus:

See Andronicus

Tribunes:

These are Roman officials whose traditional function was to protect the rights of ordinary citizens when they were threatened by unjust rulers. In *Titus Andronicus,* the tribunes are part of the audi ence of officials who listen to the competing claims of Saturninus and Bassianus in Li. Some tribunes are in the group of officials in III.i who lead Quintus and Martius to their executions. None of them responds to Titus's impassioned attempt to save the lives of his sons. Several tribunes attend Titus's banquet in V.iii; after all the killings, and after Marcus and Lucius defend the actions of the Andronici, the tribunes salute Lucius as Rome's new emperor.

Valentine:

A kinsman of Titus, he is one of the men, who responds to Titus's call for help in tying up Demetrius and Chiron in IV.ii. He assists Titus and witnesses the deaths of Lavinia's rapists, but he does not speak.

Young Lucius:

See Boy

Further Study

Broude, Ronald. "Four Forms of Vengeance in *Titus Andronicus." Journal of English and Germanic Philology* LXXVIII, no. 4 (October 1979): 494-507.

Broude sees four kinds of revenge in the play: human sacrifice to pacify the spirits of dead warriors, family vendettas, human justice, and divine vengeance. He regards Titus as the man chosen by the gods to carry out their revenge and help restore human justice in Rome.

Brower, Reuben A. ' *'Titus Andronicus:* Villainy and Tragedy." In *Shakespeare: The Tragedies,* edited by Robert B. Heilman, 28-36. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984.

Brower focuses on Timon as an undeveloped tragic hero. He suggests that Timon represents a noble man subjected to unspeakable suffering, whose cries for justice remain unanswered. A principal failure of the play, Brower contends, is that it offers Timon only a grim set of possible responses: he can go mad, increase his suffering by rigidly adhering to "the very qualities that made him a hero," or become indistinguishable from the evil people who have tormented him.

Charney, Maurice. *"Titus Andronicus."* In *All of Shakespeare,* 211-18. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

In this chapter from a book written for students, Charney discusses the play's chief characters and principal themes. He argues that Lavinia still has a crucial role even after her tongue is cut out and she can no longer speak; that while the audience sees the worst side of Titus in Act I, he regains his tragic stature through suffering; and that Marcus is a voice of reason and moderation. Charney describes Aaron as "the most brilliant and fully developed character in *Titus Andronicus,"* the one who sets the pattern for all of Shakespeare's later villains.

Cults, John. *"Titus Andronicus."* In *The Shattered Class: A Dramatic Pattern in Shakespeare's Early Plays,* 59-75. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

Cults devotes this chapter to the character of Titus, whom he regards as a deeply flawed man, incapable of seeing and acknowledging his own weaknesses. In Cult's estimation, Timon is personally ambitious but unwilling to admit this to himself; he is willing to exploit or sacrifice members of his own family in pursuit of his selfish goals; and he tries to make himself appear less guilty by blaming everyone else for the disastrous cycle of revenge.

Dessen, Alan C. "The Sense of an Ending." In *Titus Andronicus,* 90-110, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Dessen analyzes the distinctive ways nearly a dozen twentieth-century productions of *Titus Andronicus* in England, Canada, and the United States have presented the play's final scene. He demonstrates how an audience's response to the characters is shaped by the interpretations of actors and directors: for exam ple, Lavinia has sometimes been portrayed as submissive, almost zombie-like in her final appearances and sometimes as an enthusiastic participant in her fa ther's revenge; in some productions Lucius is depict ed as Rome's savior at the close of the play, while in others he represents a continuation of violence and savagery. Dessen also describes different treatments of "the fate of Aaron's child."

Hughes, Alan. Introduction to *Titus Andronicus,* by William Shakespeare, 1-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Hughes emphasizes that *Titus Andronicus* was "writ ten for the theater," and he notes that it succeeds on stage when its emotions and characterizations are treated with sincerity by actors and directors. He also declares that Titus's tragedy is complete by the close of Act I after he repeatedly violates family bonds as well as "the laws of society, the state and heaven" and that Aaron is the most theatrically effective character in the play. Hughes's introduction includes discussion of such issues as the play's date of composition, its sources, and stage history.

Kendall, Gillian Murray. " 'Lend me thy hand': Metaphor and Mayhem in *Titus Andronicus." Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 299-316.

Kendall declares that in *Titus Andronicus,* "language reflects and promotes the violence of Shakespeare's most grotesquely violent play." She describes the multiple ways in which ordinary figures of speech particularly those related to human body parts take on new and deeply sinister meanings in this play.

Miola, Robert S. *"Titus Andronicus* and the Mythos of Shakespeare's Rome." *Shakespeare Studies* XIV (1981): 85-98.

Miola looks closely at how Shakespeare used classi cal writers such as Ovid and Virgil to enhance the dignity and sadness of characters and events in *Titus Andronicus.* He focuses on the theme of rape as a violation of family honor as well as on the theme of civil strife in an essentially lawless society.

Scuro, Daniel. *"Titus Andronicus:* A Crimson-Flushed Stage!" *Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin* 17 (1970): 40-48.

Scuro provides a survey of critical reaction to the most universally acclaimed production of *Titus Andronicus* in the twentieth century: the 1955 staging directed by Peter Brook and featuring Laurence Olivier as Titus. Scuro evokes the haunting intensity and brooding melancholy of Brook's formal, highly stylized presentation of the play.

Waith, Eugene M. Introduction to *Titus Andronicus,* by William Shakespeare, 1-69. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Waith discusses the ambiguous characterizations of Titus and Aaron, and argues that the violence in *Titus Andronicus* is "an integral part" of Shakespeare's dramatic technique. He also comments on the signifi cance of the various ceremonies and spectacles in the play, contending that they enhance thematic issues such as the necessity for political order and serve as structural devices to link dramatic events. In addition, Waith provides a detailed history of the play in performance and an extended discussion of Shake speare's use and manipulation of literary sources.

Willis, Susan. *"Titus Andronicus* in the Studio: Winter 1985." In her *The BBC Shakespeare Plays,* 292-313. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Willis provides a lively account of the BBC-TV videotaping of *Titus Andronicus.* Among other intriguing details about this production, we learn that the makeup for the scene with Tamora and her sons as Revenge, Murder, and Rape (V.ii) was based on the rock group Kiss, and that the stumps fitted onto the hands of the actor playing Lavinia featured "real bones from a butcher shop."

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) 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, SfS 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 SfS 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 SfS 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 SfS 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 SfS 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

SfS 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 Shakespeare 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 SfS series.

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

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

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