The Ugly American Study Guide

The Ugly American by William J. Lederer

BOOKRAGS

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Author Biography

Nationality 1: American

Birthdate: 1912

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Deathdate: 1965

William J. Lederer was born on March 31, 1912, in New York City, the son of William Julius and Paula (Franken) Lederer. He attended the United States Naval Academy, from which he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in 1936. Lederer's main career was in the U.S. Navy, from 1930 to 1958. He retired as captain. During wartime he served in Asia and with the Atlantic Fleet. From 1950 to 1958 he was special assistant to the commander-in-chief, Pacific.

After Lederer retired from the navy, he went into journalism, becoming Far East correspondent for *Reader's Digest*, from 1958 to 1963. He was author-in-residence at Harvard University, 1966-1967.

Lederer has written many books, including novels, short stories, and nonfiction on a variety of topics, during his long career. His best known work is *The Ugly American* (1958; with Burdick). His other novels include *Sarkhan* (1965; with Burdick) and *I, Giorghos* (1984). *Ensign O'Toole and Me* (1957) is a humorous look at life in the navy; *A Nation of Sheep* (1961) discusses how the United States could be more successful in its foreign aid projects. *The Mirages of Marriage* (1968; with Don D. Jackson) is an analysis of marriage in the United States. Other works include *The Last Cruise* (1950), *All the Ships at Sea* (1950), *Timothy's Song* (1965), *The Story of Pink Jade* (1966), *Our Own Worst Enemy* (1968; published in England in 1969 as *The Anguished American*), and *A Happy Book of Christmas Stories* (1981).

Lederer married Ethel Victoria Hackett in 1940. They were divorced in 1965. In the same year, Lederer married Corinne Edwards Lewis. They divorced in 1976. Lederer has three sons.

Eugene (Leonard) Burdick was born in Sheldon, Iowa, on December 12, 1918. He was the son of Jack Dale, a painter, and Marie (Ellerbroek) Burdick.

Burdick gained a bachelor of arts degree from Stanford University in 1942. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Navy and became lieutenant commander. He was awarded the Navy/Marine Corps Cross. After the war he studied in England and received a Ph.D. from Magdalen College, Oxford University, in 1950.

Burdick became assistant professor and then professor of political theory at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1950 to 1965. In addition to his scholarly writings, which included a book on voting behavior, Burdick wrote novels. His first was *The Ninth Wave* (1956), about a California politician who exploits fear and hatred. This work was followed in 1958 by *The Ugly American*, which he co-wrote with William J. Lederer. The book became a bestseller. Burdick wrote several more novels: *Fail-Safe* (1962; with Harvey Wheeler) is about the accidental triggering of a nuclear war; *The 480*, about the selection of a Republican presidential candidate, followed in 1964. In 1965, Burdick collaborated again with Lederer on another novel set in southeast Asia, *Sarkhan* (1965), which was published as *The Deceptive American* in 1977. Burdick's final work was the novel *Nina's Book* (1965).

Burdick married Carol Warren in 1942; the couple had three children. Burdick died on July 26, 1965.

Plot Summary

Chapters 1-4

The Ugly American begins in the fictional Southeast Asian country of Sarkhan, in the office of U.S. ambassador Louis Sears. Sears is upset because a hostile cartoon of him has appeared in the local newspaper.

Meanwhile an American named John Colvin is recovering in the hospital after being beaten up. Colvin has been trying to help the Sarkhanese learn how to use milk and its by-products, and he set up a milk-distribution center outside the capital city, Haidho. But he is betrayed by an old friend named Deong who has turned communist. Deong tells a group of Sarkhanese women that Colvin is trying to put a drug in the milk that would enable him to take advantage of Sarkhanese girls. Colvin denies it, but the women beat him. He is left unconscious on the steps of the U.S. Embassy.

The ambassador complains about the cartoon to Prince Ngong, the head of the Sarkhanese government. Ngong fears that a large U.S. loan may be in jeopardy and instructs the newspaper to print a flattering cartoon and editorial about Sears.

The second story introduces Ambassador Sears's Russian counterpart, Louis Krupitzyn. Unlike Sears, Krupitzyn has had long preparation for his position. He can read and write Sarkhanese and understands Sarkhanese culture. He is also cunning. During a famine, the Americans send 14,000 tons of rice. However, Krupitzyn arranges for every bag of American rice to have stenciled on it in Sarkhanese that it is a gift from Russia. The Americans protest, but the Sarkhanese continue to believe the Russians were their benefactors.

The next character to be introduced is Father Finian, a Catholic priest from Boston who has been assigned to Burma. A fierce anti-communist, Finian recruits nine local Catholics who also want to fight communism. They publish a small anti-communist newspaper and then trick a Russian expert by secretly recording and then broadcasting disparaging things he has said about the local peasants. It then becomes clear to the local people that the Russians do not have their best interests at heart.

Chapters 4-10

Joe Bing, a flamboyant American public relations officer in the Southeast Asian city of Serkya, gives a presentation in Washington about employment opportunities abroad. He paints a rosy picture of luxury travel, an excellent salary, low expenses, with no need to learn a foreign language. A young American, Marie McIntosh, is recruited. She writes home about the pleasant and luxurious life she now lives in Sarkhan.

Sears makes another diplomatic blunder over a rumor that the United States is about to evict the Sarkhanese Air Force from land lent to them. But Sears soon gets what he

wants when he is recalled to the United States to take up a federal judgeship. The new ambassador is Gilbert MacWhite, a professional foreign-service officer. Unlike Sears, MacWhite learns the local language. MacWhite is eager to combat communist influence, but he makes the mistake of trusting his old Chinese servants, Donald and Roger. Li Pang, a visitor and friend of MacWhite, interrogates Donald and tricks him into revealing that he has been passing information to the communists. MacWhite tries to learn from his mistake by traveling in the Philippines and Vietnam so he can understand how to combat communism. In the Philippines, he hears about Colonel Hillandale, an American who embraces local culture and is known as □The Ragtime Kid□ because of his love for jazz and his ability to play the harmonica.

Chapters 11-15

Major James Wolchek of the U.S. Army visits Major Monet, a Frenchman, in Hanoi, Vietnam. The French are losing the battle against communist insurgents; at Dien Bien Phu, French forces are encircled. Monet invites Wolchek to parachute with French troops into the besieged fortress as a foreign observer, but before they can do this Dien Bien Phu falls to the communists. In subsequent skirmishes with the enemy, Monet and his legionnaires are defeated again and again. Wolchek explains to Monet and MacWhite that the communists are winning because they are practicing a new kind of warfare. As the communists press their assault on Hanoi, Wolchek and Monet are slightly wounded. MacWhite acquires a pamphlet by Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung that explains his concept of guerilla warfare. Monet uses these new tactics and wins a skirmish with the communists. But then the French evacuate Hanoi and a communist army enters the city.

In Cambodia, Tom Knox, an American, helps the local people improve their chicken and egg yield and is greeted with enthusiasm by villagers wherever he goes. At a conference that appraises the results of U.S. aid to Cambodia, Tom makes practical proposals for further increasing chicken and egg yield, but he is overruled because the Americans want to develop mechanized farms. When French government diplomats and a wealthy Cambodian landowner provide Tom with a series of luxury trips, he forgets all about his good idea.

In Sarkhan, Colonel Hillandale attends a dinner party given by the Philippine ambassador. Hillandale entertains everyone by giving palm readings, which is a respected practice in the country. He is given an opportunity to read the palm of the king, but the appointment is sabotaged by the hostility and incompetence of George Swift, MacWhite's deputy. The king is insulted, and MacWhite gets Swift transferred.

Chapters 16-18

In Hong Kong, a meeting of the Special Armament section of the Asia conference is discussing the prospect of placing U.S. nuclear weapons on Asian soil. The Asians become suspicious when the Americans refuse to discuss classified material about the

safety of the weapons. Solomon Asch, leader of the American delegation, feels let down by Captain Boning, one of his negotiators, who gives the impression he is deliberately holding back information. As a result, the Asians decide to oppose the installation of nuclear weapons on their soil.

In Vietnam, Homer Atkins, a retired engineer, meets with Vietnamese, French, and U.S. officials. He has been asked to give advice on building dams and military roads, but he tells the Vietnamese that they should start with smaller projects they can do for themselves, such as building brick factories and a model canning plant. MacWhite is impressed by Atkins and invites him to Sarkhan, where Atkins teams up with a local man named Jeepo to design a water pump. They go into business together, hiring workers who manufacture the pumps and then sell them.

Chapters 19-21

Atkins's wife Emma notices that all the old people in the village of Chang 'Dong have badly bent backs. She realizes this pervasive condition is due to the short-handled brooms they use for sweeping, so she invents a long-handled broom using sturdy reeds as a handle. The local people soon learn to make their own long-handled brooms.

Jonathan Brown, a tough U.S. senator, visits Vietnam to find out for himself what use is made of U.S. aid. He wants to meet local people, but the U.S. Embassy staff tries to control the information he has access to. On a visit to an ammunition depot, Brown questions a Vietnamese man, but Dr. Barre, the interpreter, alters the man's answer in a way that he thinks will please the senator. The same thing happens when Brown visits Hanoi and tries to find out what the real military situation is there. As he goes home to the United States he realizes that he has talked only to military men and government officials, although later on the Senate floor he claims that he understands the situation in Vietnam because he has been there.

MacWhite is rebuked by the secretary of state for his testimony to a Senate committee about the situation in Southeast Asia. MacWhite replies that he fears the Russians will win the cold war unless the Americans act in the real interests of the countries whose friendship they need, not in the interest of propaganda. He makes many practical suggestions, all of which are rejected. He resigns as ambassador, and the State Department decides to replace him with Joe Bing.

The Ugly American ends with a □Factual Epilogue□ in which the authors explain that although their stories are fiction, they are based on fact.

Chapter 1, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #1"

Chapter 1, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #1" Summary

The novel, published in 1958, takes place in the early 1950s at the height of the Cold War between the U.S.S.R. and the United States of America. Set primarily in the fictional Asian country of Sarkhan, the struggle between Russian Communists and American Foreign Service personnel plays out battle by battle through examples of military, political and social events.

In 1953, Louis "Lucky" Sears, previously a three-term United States Senator, accepts the role of Ambassador to Sarkhan as a holding position while he waits for a Federal judgeship to become available in the States. Sears is thoroughly unqualified to be an Ambassador. He has no aptitude or interest in diplomacy and privately refers to the Sarkhanese people as "monkeys". He does not speak or read more than a few words of Sarkhanese and refuses to learn the language. Though incompetent, he is rewarded with an entertainment allowance almost as large as his salary. He buys liquor tax-free and he lives in the ambassador's mansion free of charge.

As the story opens, Ambassador Sears is seething over a political cartoon in the Eastern Star newspaper that pictures a fat American leading a Sarkhanese man by a tether to a sign that reads "Coca Cola." Beneath the cartoon is the name "Lucky". Sears earned the nickname "Lucky" during his three political campaigns. He won the first because Democrats were in favor. In the second campaign, his opponent died ten days before the election. In the third campaign, the opponent's wife stirred up a scandal. The political cartoon infuriates Sears: not because it insults America, but because it depicts him in a negative fashion.

The American Embassy's press attachy, Margaret Johnson, arrives at Sears' office with news that an American businessman named John Colvin was beaten and left naked on the steps of the Embassy with a note accusing him of molesting local girls. Ambassador Sears dismisses the news as a simple boy meets girl affair. Press Attachy Johnson warns that the news could hurt the embassy politically, so Sears orders her to contact the man in charge of protocol, Prince Ngong.

John Colvin wakes up in the hospital. Through his pain, he recalls his relationship with his attacker to understand why his friend Deong attacked him. Colvin had met Deong ten years earlier in 1943 after Colvin parachuted into the country to fight off the Japanese. Colvin, trained as an OSS agent, spoke Sarkhanese. While he fled the Japanese, he ran into Deong, who hid him until the Japanese patrol left. In the following eight months, Colvin and Deong sabotaged Japanese trains, bridges, and patrol boats. Once they hid in a monastery and one of the priests was killed by a Japanese soldier because he refused to help the Japanese. Deong was in it for the excitement. Meanwhile, Colvin fell in love with the Sarkhanese people and their gentle culture. The last mission Colvin and Deong performed enlisted the help of Sarkhanese cooks to

serve the Japanese food laced with ipecac before the American Marines landed. By the time the Marines arrived, the Japanese soldiers were too weak from vomiting to resist.

Three weeks later, Colvin returned to work on the family dairy farm in Wisconsin. In 1952, he read about the rising influence of Communism in Sarkhan. Colvin decided that cows would save the Sarkhanese from Communism because a certain breed of Texas cow could eat the tough thick grass that made the hillsides of Sarkhan unusable for farming. First, Colvin introduces powdered milk to the Sarkhanese. His plan is to bring in cows and teach the Sarkhanese to market the milk and by-products. Colvin is executing the first part of his plan when Deong appears and demands that Colvin put ipecac in the powdered milk machine. Just outside, the village women line up for milk. Deong holds a gun to Colvin's back and argues that changing the economy of Sarkhan through milk and cattle would make the Sarkhanese believe that America was their savior. Deong is a Communist who sees America as the enemy. Colvin refuses to poison the milk, so he and Deong fight. Deong shoots Colvin in the right arm. They wrestle and Colvin holds Deong in a scissors grip with his legs. Deong shouts to the women outside the door that he shot Colvin because he caught him trying to put Cocol, a powerful aphrodisiac, in the milk. The locals fear the drug because of stories that it changes virgins into prostitutes. Colvin argues that Deong wants him to put ipecac in the milk. In the end, the women believe Deong and turn on Colvin, beating him unconscious.

Prince Ngong meets with Ambassador Sears and listens to his complaint about the political cartoon. Ngong explains that the people are suspicious about the plan to receive foreign aid in trade for allowing the Americans to build air bases in Sarkhan. After Sears leaves, Ngong meets with an advisory committee of the Sarkhanese Cabinet and tells them that the Ambassador may be petty and stupid but he could interfere with the twenty-million-dollar loan from the United States. Cabinet member U Nang offers to ask his brother-in-law, the publisher of the Eastern Star newspaper, to run a flattering cartoon and editorial on the Ambassador. All agree to the plan.

That afternoon Ambassador Sears gets a call from the publisher of the newspaper about an upcoming flattering editorial. Appeased, Sears moves on to other issues. He visits Colvin at the hospital and offers to send him back to the States as soon as possible. Colvin refuses to go.

Chapter 1, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #1" Analysis

Simple dairy farmer Colvin understands the real needs of the people of Sarkhan better than the official ambassador. Whereas Ambassador Sears separates himself from and mocks the people of Sarkhan, Colvin risks his life to help the people. Ironically, it is the failure of the embassy to combat communism that divides Colvin and his native friend Deong, and this division thwarts Colvin's efforts to improve the lives of the Sarkhanese through dairy farming. Ambassador Sears is more concerned about the insult to his image than the life-threatening attack on an American dairy farmer and its broader, political implications.

Chapter 2, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #2"

Chapter 2, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #2" Summary

The Russian Ambassador to Sarkhan is Louis Krupitzyn, a career diplomat. Krupitzyn embodies Russian loyalty to the state. He was orphaned by the state when he witnessed his parents being shot to death by soldiers. As a child, he decides he wants to be the one holding the gun instead of facing it. In school at the Orphans' Educational Center at Murmansk, at age 18, he wins the Lenin Prize for Komsomol Literary Achievement for his political essay. The next year he begins training for diplomatic service as a chauffeur in New York. The Russians employ only Russians at their embassies by hiring servants from the Foreign Service Apprentice Corps. The Russians work for the embassy while they study.

While working at the Russian embassy in New York, Krupitzyn studies American unions and takes a course at Columbia University on the Psychology of the American Elite. He serves two years in Prague and then two years in Moscow at the Foreign Institute Academy. He spends three years in China as an observer on the staff of Mao-Tse Tung. He marries Nada Kolosoff, a Foreign Service colleague, and then returns to Moscow in 1949. He and his wife work on a survey ship hired by the Sarkhanese government to chart the Southeast Asian coast near Sarkhan. They study the Sarkhanese language, religion, and culture for two years. Krupitzyn molds himself into the Sarkhanese standard by losing 40 pounds, learning to play a nose flute, taking ballet, studying Sarkhanese literature and drama, and attending Buddhist lectures.

Krupitzyn arrives in Sarkhan a week after the American Ambassador; but when he arrives, he speaks the language and pays his respects to the Chief Abbot with a personal visit. The Chief Abbot and Krupitzyn discuss philosophy for hours.

A typhoon strikes the south of Sarkhan before harvest, and within months, a famine follows. A translator and a chauffeur at the American Embassy tip off Krupitzyn that the United States is shipping 14,000 tons of rice to the area that will arrive in two days. Krupitzyn buys a few tons of rice and brings it immediately to the famine zone. He delivers it on behalf of the Russian government and apologizes that it is so small. He also promises more rice soon and tells the people that it is a gift and that, unlike the Americans, the Russians expect nothing in return.

When the American shipment arrives, the Russians have people in place to mark on the rice sacks in Sarkhanese "This rice is a gift from Russia". American trucks unload the rice in the south and communists there tell the people that the Russians hired the Americans to bring the rice because the Americans would do nothing without profit. The Americans and Ambassador Sears stand for photos during the distribution. Sears does not understand the loudspeaker announcing in Sarkhanese that the rice is from Russia. Weeks later, Sears realizes he has been fooled and rice shipments that follow are

carefully guarded. Sears has flyers distributed that credit America with the rice shipment.

Krupitzyn reports to Moscow that Ambassador Sears is a valuable tool in the effort to convert Sarkhan to Communism because he is stupid, offensive, and unaware of Sarkhanese culture. He urges local newspapers to praise Sears. He urges Pravda to criticize Sears to trick the United States into believing Sears is an effective Ambassador. In a final note of his report, he asks Moscow to send a dossier on a priest named Father Finian who has won favor among the locals.

Chapter 2, "Lucky, Lucky Lou #2" Analysis

In stark contrast to the American Ambassador's lack of preparation for Foreign Service, the Russian Ambassador receives intensive education and internship. The Russians receive thorough political training on how to promote the policies and programs of Russia abroad. Russian diplomats, like Krupitzyn, have to earn their positions of power and influence and prove their effectiveness to remain there. They seize opportunities to take advantage of the stupidity of Americans and they win many battles for the loyalty of the natives by simply infiltrating society at many levels. The Americans, by contrast, are like fools armed with knives in a gunfight.

Chapter 3, "Nine Friends"

Chapter 3, "Nine Friends" Summary

Father Finian holds a doctorate of philosophy from Oxford University, and later serves as a Chaplain in the United States Navy. His fight against communism begins during the war when he encounters a hardened and bitter Marine whose devotion to communism resembles religious devotion. Finian launches himself into the study of communism and the tactics used by the communists to convert people into believers. In Burma, Finian asks the Archbishop for supplies to go into the jungle to do his mission. The Archbishop helps, though he has reservations that Finian will succeed. Father Finian applies his Jesuit training to lead a movement to undermine communism in Burma. He studies the language and customs and enlists the aid of nine local men to form a plan. Father Finian offers to help the men, who are led by U Tien, to establish goals and a plan of action. He warns the men that the Communists demand absolute loyalty over the individual's soul and will. U Tien says he wants Burma to be as it once was—a safe place to worship as Buddhists or Baptists or even to be non-believers. The Communists, he says, are the enemy because they forbid the worship of anything but Communism. Father Finian challenges the men to answer a question: "Why do we not now have the freedom to worship or live as we please?" The men answer that the communists will not allow it. Finian asks why the Burmese believe what the communists say.

The group agrees that they must study the communist propaganda to reveal the lies in it. They agree to gather intelligence on the extent and types of power used by the communist party. When they return and share their information, they are stunned at the scope of communist influence in every village and organization. For two weeks the men debate about what they can do. They form an eight-point report that outlines the steps to show the Burmese people the true nature and danger of communism. They begin by publishing a newspaper innocuously titled 'The Communist Farmer.' The first two issues feature advice on farming interspersed with writings by Karl Marx in which he calls the peasants stupid and backward. Another article quotes Stalin's speech that justifies the slaughter of farmers to create farming collectives. When the communists try to suppress the paper, they look ineffective and silly.

The Russians send in an expert on Burma named Vinich to squash the rebel paper. Toki, one of the men working with Father Finian, infiltrates the communist network. Toki secretly tapes a private meeting of the communist leaders. The paper invites people to listen to a radio announcement on June 10 at 2 p.m. At the appointed time, the radio announcement names Vladimir Vinich as an official spokesman for Russia and the Communist Party. The radio then plays a recording of Vinich privately addressing the communist leaders in Burma. In the recording, he instructs the Communists to bear down on the peasants and to stop promising them tractors because they will not be given. The Communists' promises are exposed as lies.

The nine men meet in the jungle to celebrate their first major victory. They vow to spread the effort to nearby Sarkhan before communism gets a foothold there. Father Finian reports in his diary, "The evil of Communism is that it has masked from native peoples the simple fact that it intends to ruin them".

Chapter 3, "Nine Friends" Analysis

In the larger battle between good and evil, Communism plays the role of evil and freedom (or American ideals) plays the role of good. Father Finian, a man of God, is pitted against the Communist leader Vinich in this symbolic war. Like the Devil, Communism lures people with lies and false promises, but nine good men recognize the evil nature of Communism as a threat to their way of life. They join forces with Father Finian to expose the Communists through their own words. Father Finian and his group show evangelistic devotion in promoting freedom of speech and exposing the evils of Communism through their underground newspaper. In this chapter, Communism is treated as a religion in direct opposition to all other beliefs because it quashes other beliefs. Whereas Communism centralizes governmental power and suppresses the individual, the American way emphasizes that the purpose of government is to support the rights and desires of the individual.

Chapter 4, "Everybody Loves Joe Bing"

Chapter 4, "Everybody Loves Joe Bing" Summary

Ruth Jyoti, editor and publisher of the Setkya Daily Herald, documents Father Finian's trip to Burma. Her father is Anglo-Saxon and her mother Cambodian, so she enjoys the unique position of mingling in European and Eurasian cultures. In 1952, she is invited to the United States to learn about the American press. She reads local newspapers for information about the South Asian Bloc meeting, a meeting that will determine the future of Asian-American relations, and finds no news reports. Her State Department escort, Joseph Rivers, arrives and they discuss Father Finian and Joe Bing. Jyoti extols the efforts of Father Finian while Rivers raves about Joe Bing, the fat, six-foot-tall chief of information for the ICS in Setkya. Jyoti describes the offensive behavior of Joe Bing through his parties in which only Europeans are invited and alcohol is served, which is forbidden to Moslems and Buddhists. She also reports that when Father Finian asked Joe Bing for pens to give to the natives for distributing the anti-Communist underground newspaper, Joe Bing refused by citing policy regarding the private use of commissary items.

At a press dinner for Ruth, she is asked to say something about Americans stationed in Asia. She skewers the behavior of the incoming Americans as isolationist, elitist, ineffective, and offensive. They socialize among themselves and rarely venture into the culture or society around them. She then praises Bob Maile of the United States Information Service (USIS) for learning the language and for entering with a servant's heart. He placed his children in local schools instead of the separate school for Europeans and Americans. Bob Maile, Jyoti reports, also defused a potential disaster when an American was accused of raping a local girl at a temple. Maile asked the editors of the local papers to investigate the accusation. The editors trusted Maile, and when they investigated the accusation, they found that the American had refused to pay a woman at a brothel and got into a fight. Jyoti says that good deeds get reported on the "bamboo telegraph", or by word of mouth. She admires Maile and says that if more Americans behaved like him the Communists would not have much influence in Asia. In contrast, the chief American public information man in Setkya responded to the rape accusation against the dairy farmer Colvin by hiding in his office and doing nothing.

Chapter 4, "Everybody Loves Joe Bing" Analysis

Clueless, fat, and drunk is Jyoti's assessment of the average American diplomat. Jyoti symbolically is, like her newspaper, the voice of Asia. She honors the listeners with her frankness and she points to the successful, un-official ambassadors as the model to emulate. She sees the same problem with the American press that she sees in the American Embassies abroad—isolationist superiority that rates all things American as more important than events abroad. The Ambassadors that serve in Asia rarely bother to even learn the language, as if everyone should learn English to earn the attention of

America. Joe Bing manifests style without substance; he poses as the great diplomat, but he is so clueless that he does more harm than good.

Chapter 5, "Confidential and Personal"

Chapter 5, "Confidential and Personal" Summary

Ambassador Louis Sears sends a long letter to Dexter Peterson at the State Department in Washington, D.C. about the situation in Sarkhan. In the letter, he brags about how skillfully he handled the Colvin scandal. He includes newspaper clippings that praise his own effectiveness as an Ambassador. He warns that Father Finian is trouble for starting a rebellion in Burma and asks if the Catholic Church supports him. He also brags about how he corrected the misunderstanding about the source of the rice by distributing handbills crediting the USA. He tells the State Department that he has things under control and that the threat of Communism is all bunk. He complains that Maggie Johnson, the press attachy, brings in news reporters too often. He asks for Joe Bing to be reassigned to Setkya and he asks for pretty secretaries to help morale.

Chapter 5, "Confidential and Personal" Analysis

Ambassador Sears is so superficial that he sees and hears only those things that support his own version of reality and he asserts his version both up and down the chain of command. He is like a man who holds a mirror to his face and likes what he sees so much that he never bothers to look around at the rest of the world. Sears and Bing are two of a kind and so they naturally admire one another.

Chapter 6, "Employment Opportunities Abroad"

Chapter 6, "Employment Opportunities Abroad" Summary

Lured to a meeting at American University to hear about Foreign Service jobs, candidates hear from Joseph Bing and Hamilton Bridge Upton, a man who served as a consul in seven countries. Upton talks for fifteen minutes, inviting the students to serve their country to fight the spread of a malignant (communist) conspiracy abroad. He then introduces Joseph Bing as an expert at treating natives as equals. Bing describes the first-class lifestyle of living abroad and how little contact with natives is actually required. For twenty minutes, he praises the comforts and benefits of life abroad and adds that no one need be inconvenienced by having to learn the language of other countries. Marie MacIntosh and her friends become enticed by the promise of first-class housing and servants abroad. Immediately after the talk, seventy-seven people apply. A retired engineer, Homer Atkins, and a newspaperman named Kohler also apply for jobs in Asia. Upton observes a week later that the applicants would make more money abroad than they would at home, except for the engineer. They dismiss the engineer's application as a joke.

Chapter 6, "Employment Opportunities Abroad" Analysis

Out of the seventy-seven applicants, none are expected to bring skills or aptitude to the job in trade for high pay and a luxurious lifestyle. The one qualified applicant, an engineer, is dismissed as an aberration. This chapter describes exactly how ineffective the Foreign Service is from the very beginning, from the way that people are brought into service. This chapter offers a counterpoint to the assessment of Joe Bing by Asian Editor Jyoti in chapter 4. Bing is despised by knowledgeable Asians but praised by his colleagues.

Chapter 7, "The Girl Who Got Recruited"

Chapter 7, "The Girl Who Got Recruited" Summary

Marie MacIntosh is a bored 28-year-old woman who believes her future lies in finding a husband abroad. She accepts an assignment in Sarkhan. A month after she arrives, she writes home to her ex-roommates about life in Sarkhan. Bragging about chauffeurs, live-in servants and how the thousand Americans stick together and enjoy parties every night, she lives rent free with a basic salary of $3,400 with a $680 increase because Sarkhan is listed as a hardship post.

Chapter 7, "The Girl Who Got Recruited" Analysis

A young worker at the American Embassy brags to her friends. At the highest and lowest levels of diplomatic service, mediocrity is recruited and rewarded. Ambassador Sears is as unqualified to lead an embassy as MacIntosh is to work in one as a support staffer.

Chapter 8, "The Ambassador and the Working Press"

Chapter 8, "The Ambassador and the Working Press" Summary

In 1954, a year into his Sarkhan Ambassadorship, Louis Sears receives news that a federal judgeship in America has opened up for him. Then a scandal spreads in the press that land purchased fifty years earlier by the United States is about to be developed into high-priced housing by American speculators. The land was leased to the Royal Sarkhanese Air Force and developed into a training and flight base. The land is on high, dry ground surrounded by fashionable suburban housing. The Asian press publishes the rumor and raises concerns about the land. An American editor begs Ambassador Sears to deny the rumor. Sears defers responsibility to Joe Bing, the new public affairs officer. Bing is in Hong Kong, so Sears reluctantly agrees to meet with four Asian newspaper editors. When asked about the land, Sears says, "I have no comment to make." The Asian editors take the statement as confirmation since it is not a denial. In his last few days in Sarkhan, Sears does three things: 1) he refuses protection for Father Finian; 2) he recommends that the Sarkhanese Government refuse a visa to John Colvin (the man who wants to develop dairy farming); and 3) he declares that Sarkhan is firmly on the side of America. His last act in Sarkhan is to throw the biggest boozing party in the history of the city of Haidho.

Chapter 8, "The Ambassador and the Working Press" Analysis

Sears does everything wrong and gets rewarded with a judgeship. It is ironic that someone with such seriously impaired judgment is appointed to judge federal cases in America. He moves from one job in which he is completely unqualified into another. At the time when Sears needs Bing to help, Bing is not there for him. Symbolically, Joe Bing is absent even when he is present because he is as substantial as a vapor or a shadow. He, like Sears, usually makes the wrong decision anyway.

Chapter 9, "Everyone Has Ears"

Chapter 9, "Everyone Has Ears" Summary

The new Ambassador to Sarkhan is the Honorable Gilbert MacWhite. Princeton educated, athletic, and red-haired, MacWhite is an expert on Soviet theory and practice. He learns Sarkhanese, and reads every book he can find on Sarkhanese history and politics. He consults experts from many fields about Sarkhan. MacWhite plans a strategic assault on Communism in Sarkhan with native leaders.

In a meeting with the Honorable Li Pang, a representative of Chiang Kai-shek, MacWhite seeks help with the Chinese leaders in Sarkhan. As they discuss communism, two Chinese servants overhear them. Li becomes quiet until the servants leave, then he chastises MacWhite for talking in their presence. MacWhite says that the servants don't speak or understand English. Li proves otherwise by interrogating the servant named Donald in Chinese. Li accuses him of stealing a watch and whiskey. In English, Li tells MacWhite that he will ask Donald later about the missing briefcase and typewriter.

MacWhite has not had anything stolen but he plays along with Li. Li intimidates Donald with rapid-fire questions. Donald argues that the typewriter and briefcase are in the study, proving that he understands English. Li then gets Donald to confess that he has been giving information to the Communists because they have his children in custody. MacWhite is rattled by the realization that his home and his embassy are so vulnerable to spies. Native servants and workers serve in both.

MacWhite asks for permission from the State Department to go to the Philippines and Vietnam to study how their governments are handling Communism. With the approval of the State Department, MacWhite meets with the Minister of Defense, Ramon Magsaysay, of the Philippines. Magsaysay advises him that Americans would be better Ambassadors if they avoided the cocktail circuit and other bureaucrats and followed their consciences. He praises one such natural ambassador, Colonel Hillandale. He also advises MacWhite to go to Vietnam to watch the battle around Dien Bien Phu to learn the connections between warfare, statesmanship, diplomacy, and economics.

Chapter 9, "Everyone Has Ears" Analysis

Whereas Ambassador Sears was incompetent and ignored problems, Ambassador MacWhite makes mistakes and humbly learns from them. MacWhite's appointment promises great improvement and positive change.

Chapter 10, "The Ragtime Kid"

Chapter 10, "The Ragtime Kid" Summary

Air Force Colonel Edwin Barnum Hillandale comes to Manila in 1952 as a liaison officer. He embraces all things Filipino: the food, the culture, the Tagalog language, and the people. By 1953, he assists Magsaysay's presidential campaign in the tough Communist-held area north of Manila. In this area, the Communists spread word that the Americans are rich snobs and that anyone who associates with them (such as Magsaysay) is out of touch with the people.

Hillandale drives up to that area and parks his motorcycle in a crowded area. He then sits on the curb and plays Filipino tunes on his harmonica. He asks in Tagalog for others to sing along. After 300 locals join him in song, he finishes by asking them where he can find 'adobo' and 'pancit,' native dishes. Announcing that he is broke, he says he hopes someone will invite him to lunch. He demonstrates his poverty by opening his wallet to reveal a mere sixty centavos. All his money goes home to feed his family in America where things cost more than they do in the Philippines. The locals are silent, doubting that an American can be poor. Hillandale then says he has never met Filipinos who would turn down a hungry man. Shamed, the locals invite him to their homes. Over the next few weekends, he returns to the province to play music, eat, and talk with the locals. Based on their personal witness of meeting an American Air Force Colonel, the villagers denounce the Communist propaganda. Magsaysay wins ninety-five percent of the province in the election.

Chapter 10, "The Ragtime Kid" Analysis

Hillandale destroys the credibility of the Communist propaganda by being the opposite of the propaganda. He embraces the food, music, and language of the people and they respond by embracing him and shunning Communism. This is skilled diplomacy at its finest—direct and personal, with the common touch. Like Father Finian, this excellent example of fighting communism comes from a civilian instead of an official Embassy staffer.

Chapter 11, "The Iron of War"

Chapter 11, "The Iron of War" Summary

Army Major James 'Tex' Wolcheck reports to Hanoi, Vietnam, as a military observer. Major Monet, his French commander, laughs at Wolcheck's orders to parachute into Dien Bien Phu. He suggests that Wolcheck remain on base because Dien Bien Phu has become surrounded by communist troops. Tex calmly says that he has made over a hundred jumps, five into enemy fire. Monet apologizes.

Monet introduces Wolcheck to the French legionnaires under his command. Wolcheck warmly greets a black American, an act unexpected from a white American in the early 1950s. The black soldier named Davis responds with pleasant shock. Monet and Wolcheck prepare for the jump for two days while they discuss warfare strategy. Ambassador MacWhite arrives the day Dien Bien Phu falls and the mission is called off. Monet leads his troops to a new front.

Wolcheck briefs MacWhite on the unpredictable nature of warfare in the jungle. In village after village, the Legionnaires perform flawless deployment and get fired on from unexpected positions. They lose battle after battle for three weeks. Wolcheck, MacWhite, and Monet search for reasons for their failure. Wolcheck describes the battle tactics of Mao Tse-Tung in planting armed agents in villages long before the battle. Monet shrugs off this information. He is frustrated. He has lost half his men in lost battles, and the rest of his men suffer from fever, hookworm, and dysentery. Thanks to recent battles, Wolcheck has a hand-grenade fragment in his butt and Monet suffered a burp gun bullet in his left elbow. They fight for three more weeks using western warfare tactics until the black soldier named Davis and a Vietnamese nicknamed Apache return from a scouting mission mutilated. The Communists gouged out one of Davis's eyes and cut the vocal cords of Apache as a message. Horrified, Monet changes his mind and agrees to study the war tactics of Mao.

Chapter 11, "The Iron of War" Analysis

The mutilation of the American soldier and the Vietnamese soldier symbolize the demoralizing losses inflicted by the Communists. They silence the Vietnamese and they leave the American half-blind. In truth, the Americans operate half blind because they support the French who do not report the whole truth about the status of the war. Though Monet is honest with Wolcheck, the French generals are not honest with the American government. It is the lower ranking officers and the common soldier who suffer for the mistakes of the commanding authorities. The title of the chapter refers to the shrapnel Wolcheck carries in his body from three different wars from their bloodiest, most decisive battles: the invasion of Normandy, France in World War II, Pork Chop Hill in Korea, and Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam. Wolcheck is symbolically the ultimate soldier.

Chapter 12, "The Lessons of War"

Chapter 12, "The Lessons of War" Summary

The next day MacWhite obtains a copy of the booklet on war by Mao. MacWhite reads the booklet aloud to Monet and Wolcheck. Though many of the tactics take years to execute, they can employ two tactics to their immediate advantage. First, they can use darkness and mobility to strike the weak points of the enemy. Second, they can identify and neutralize the command position of the enemy using Mao's writings. The enemy command station is proscribed as being as close to the battle as "a man can trot in half an hour." They examine a map and locate a bamboo forest two miles from the village as the probable command post. Wolcheck recommends fashioning a weapon used during the Korean War. The weapon is a flatbed truck on which they mount twenty 5-inch rocket launchers in a circle that fire simultaneously. Using the enemy's tactics, the troops move in darkness and easily cut through the enemy line to the command post. The truck launches rockets, clearing the command post and the surrounding field. The fighting stops as soon as the enemy command post is destroyed. The remaining enemy soldiers retreat.

Back in Hanoi afterward, Tex, MacWhite, and Monet face the combined fury of two French admirals, four French generals, and an American major general. The American major general accuses Tex of violating his observer role and Tex argues that he did not fire a weapon. The admirals and generals rage at the men for abandoning standard, European traditional warfare operations. MacWhite demands to know how many of the admirals and generals have read the warfare tactics of Mao. None have. Monet recommends that the tactics of Mao be used against the communists. He uses his most successful recent win as proof that enemy tactics work in this war in this place. The admirals and generals dismiss them. Tex, MacWhite, and Monet head off to a bar to drink.

Shortly afterward, the French evacuate Hanoi with a parade as if they had won the war. MacWhite, Tex and Monet watch the French leave. On the heels of the French departure, the Communist troops walk into Hanoi. Some are carrying guns made from pipes, and many are barefoot. The Communist officer arrives on a bicycle and halts when he sees MacWhite, Tex, and Monet. Monet shouts to the officer in Vietnamese that they are the rear guard and that they are leaving. The officer waves them off. Tex announces that this is another loss as the Communists enter Hanoi.

Chapter 12, "The Lessons of War" Analysis

The French lose the battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. The lessons of this war are learned by Monet, Wolcheck, and MacWhite, but are lost on the commanding generals and admirals. Wolcheck represents both the common man who sees things the way they really are and the ultimate soldier who has to take orders from authorities who

sometimes refuse to see the way things really are. The mistakes of the French foreshadow the same mistakes the Americans make when they enter the war in Vietnam. This proves once again the adage that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

Chapter 13, "What Would You Do If You Were President?"

Chapter 13, "What Would You Do If You Were President?" Summary

Journalist U Maung Swe of Burma is a devout anti-communist who speaks English and had fought beside the Americans in Northern Burma and Southern China. In 1954 at a dinner party for MacWhite in Rangoon, U Maung Swe is asked about British and American prestige in Asia. U Maung Swe answers, "Poor America. It took the British a hundred years to lose their prestige in Asia. America has managed to lose hers in ten years". He explains that the Americans behave differently in foreign countries than they do at home. In particular, they tend to socialize only among themselves and Europeans, and they act superior toward the locals.

Swe cites a good example of diplomacy in the way the Ford Foundation brought jobs to Indonesia. The Ford people brought their own cars and had to go to Dutch garages for repairs because the Indonesians did not know how to repair cars. The Ford Foundation brought some Indonesians to America and sent back mechanics to train the Indonesians to set up their own repair garages. In another good example, Swe describes a quiet couple named Martin who moved to Burma and spoke Burmese. They lived simply and taught their neighbors how to can fruits and vegetables. The Martins distributed seeds, helping the area to become the canning center for the nation. He describes the Russian effort as being far more effective in reaching the Burmese people because they select visible, desirable projects to fund. The Russians learn the language and the culture and infiltrate it to plant the seeds of communism. U Maung Swe predicts that Americans could quickly beat the Communists if they could learn to live like locals and develop a definite policy for reaching the locals.

MacWhite approaches U Maung Swe and the two go for a walk to talk over American policy. MacWhite asks for advice on Sarkhan. U Maung Swe commends the efforts of Colvin to bring dairy farming to the country. He says that the Communists set up Colvin because his plan could work to keep the Sarkhanese independent. He admonishes MacWhite to start with the little things that are Sarkhanese.

Chapter 13, "What Would You Do If You Were President?" Analysis

Like a song refrain, the policy of starting with little things repeats throughout the book. Small local efforts mean more than building dams or going to war. The Russians understand the concept of doing the little things. They infiltrate society to nudge the people toward Communism in small ways in every village and organization. The

Americans blunder over the little local needs and spend fortunes on large useless projects. Without a clear uniform policy on foreign affairs, policy decisions fall on embassy staffers. U Maung Swe echoes the advice of Asian Editor Jyoti on how to improve foreign policy to reach the Asian people. Here the news of the dairy farmer has been passed along the bamboo telegraph to the leaders of other countries, again affirming the concept that the little things are noticed.

Chapter 14, "How to Buy an American Junior Grade"

Chapter 14, "How to Buy an American Junior Grade" Summary

Thomas Knox is a dedicated chicken farmer who always wanted to visit Asia. In 1953, he moves to Cambodia to consult people about chicken farming. Knox is known for three things: he spends all his salary in Cambodia, he knows more Cambodians than any other Westerner, and he adores Cambodian food. His fame grows as he travels the countryside examining chickens and advising people on how to care for them. As an experienced farmer, he also draws on his knowledge to help Cambodians improve their sugar cane yield and reduce transportation-caused deaths in pigs.

After evaluating the needs of the Cambodians first-hand, Knox takes his knowledge to Phnom Penh to appeal for aid at the American Aid Mission conference. At the conference, other projects are presented first, such as the project to build canals for two million dollars. Another project proposes to renovate an 18-square mile mangrove swamp into a mechanized farm and import 200,000 tons of commercial fertilizer per year for four years. Then the chairman of the conference lets Knox speak. Knox asks to import a few thousand American chickens and roosters to improve the breeding stock and increase egg production. His suggestion is rebuffed in favor of larger projects, which are apparently political rewards. Knox slams his fists on the table and declares that his plan would increase egg production two hundred percent and would improve the quality of life for the average Cambodian dramatically more than building bridges and dams. He appeals to the Chief of the Cambodian Aid Committee, a Cambodian, for support. The Cambodian agrees that the chickens are important, but he is pressured by the Committee to choose between the chickens and the mechanized farm project. The Cambodian government supports the mechanized farm project, so the Chief says the mechanized farm project is most important.

Tom Knox is so furious and embarrassed that he threatens to resign and to go to Congress to appeal his case. The Cambodian Aid Committee accepts his resignation. Outside, a French diplomat approaches him and offers to plan and fund his return trip so that he can visit more Far Eastern countries. The French diplomat feigns sympathy for Tom's plight and lures him into accepting the offer. The French and the Cambodians wine and dine and delay Tom Knox's return to Washington by routing him to Jakarta, Indonesian, New Delhi, India, Nice, and Paris. They book him on a luxury cruise from France to New York. By the time Tom Knox returns to his home in Sheldon, Iowa, he has lost his passion for the chicken project in Cambodia.

Later in Haidho, Ambassador MacWhite welcomes a representative from the Midwest Poultry Association. The man proposes that improving the egg production in Sarkhan would save the country two million dollars on food imports in a year. MacWhite checks

out the man's figures and then he writes to the American Aid Mission in Cambodia and asks if they have a chicken expert to send over. Rowe Hendy, the Chief of the Mission, writes back that their chicken expert stirred up trouble and threatened to go to congress when he didn't get his way. He recommends that MacWhite give up on the idea. MacWhite does.

Chapter 14, "How to Buy an American Junior Grade" Analysis

Big business interests maneuver a knowledgeable chicken expert into abandoning his plan. The politically savvy businessmen essentially ship Knox out of the way on the equivalent of 'a slow boat to China.' MacWhite makes the mistake of trusting a self-serving Ambassador, the kind that occupies the majority of American Embassies. MacWhite has been warned to trust his own judgment and he fails by taking the cautious route. MacWhite and Knox both get maneuvered out of their just goals by men of lesser character.

Chapter 15, "The Six-Foot Swami from Savannah"

Chapter 15, "The Six-Foot Swami from Savannah" Summary

At MacWhite's request, Colonel Hillandale, also known as the Ragtime Kid, arrives to assess the political and social situation in Sarkhan. He wanders the city of Haidho playing the Sarkhanese national anthem on his harmonica. He engages the locals by asking them to hum the tune so he can learn it better, and they respond with kindness and laughter. Hillandale observes the vast number of palm reading and astrology shops in town. As a man who holds a diploma from the Chungking School of Occult Science, he deduces that the Sarkhanese revere the occult and astrology. Hillandale is invited to a dinner to be held the next day by his old friend Don Phillippe, the Philippines Ambassador. Hillandale studies dossiers on the guest list.

Don Phillippe's dinner parties are renowned and his chef is rumored to have been hired away from the Waldorf. When Don Phillippe greets Hillandale, he confesses that the dinner must be delayed for thirty minutes, so he asks Hillandale to entertain the guests with palm reading. After Don Phillippe introduces Hillandale as a distinguished palmist and astrologer, George Swift, the Charge d'affaires for the American Embassy shouts out 'Fake! Fraud!' Don Phillippe continues his praise of Hillandale with a story about how he predicted that the 16th of the month would be lucky for Ramon Magsaysay if he went to Barang. In Barang, Magsaysay captured the leaders of the Huks, destroying the Huk insurgency. George Swift mockingly challenges Hillandale to read his palm. Hillandale recites Swift's life history with embarrassing accuracy. The Sarkhan Prime Minister then asks for a private reading, so Hillandale and the Prime Minister go into the study for half an hour. When they come out, arm in arm, dinner is served.

Three days later, Ambassador MacWhite returns to Haido. George Swift, sporting a black eye, presents MacWhite with a letter of reprimand for Colonel Hillandale. MacWhite invites Hillandale to his office to hear his side of the story. Hillandale explains the Sarkhanese reverence toward the occult and how even the top officials of the country consult astrologists before making key decisions. Hillandale describes how he talked the Prime Minister out of killing General Saugh or General Bhakal by claiming that the stars advise that he should send the men away. The Prime Minister invited him to read the King's palm.

According to protocol, George Swift is to call Prince Moyang to tell him that Hillandale accepts the honor of meeting with the King. Prince Moyang will then give instructions about the meeting. Swift tells the Prime Minister that he will call at nine the next morning. Swift instructs Hillandale to wait in his room. The next day nothing goes as agreed. Hillandale waits in his room but Swift doesn't call.

Swift sabotages Hillandale's meeting with the King through deliberate rudeness. Instead of placing the call at nine as agreed, Swift goes out to buy liquor for an upcoming party. When Hillandale finally catches up with Swift later that day, he demands to know what happened. Swift dismisses the missed appointment as being just as well, because the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and Prince Moyang all declined their invitations to the evening's party claiming they are ill. These leaders are not ill, but insulted at having been stood up. Hillandale calls Swift a fool, so Swift mocks Hillandale's palm reading as a party trick and beneath the level of real diplomacy. Infuriated, Hillandale punches Swift in the eye.

MacWhite feels the full force of the loss of this opportunity. He calls George Swift into his office and tells him that he is being transferred. Swift argues that Hillandale's vaudeville stunt does not merit serious support. MacWhite recommends the transfer on the grounds that Swift deserves a change after working here for two years.

Chapter 15, "The Six-Foot Swami from Savannah" Analysis

Hillandale's thoughtful plan to reach the King falls apart because of the ineptitude of George Swift, the deputy ambassador put in charge during MacWhite's absence. Swift represents the arrogant American attitude toward foreign cultures. Swift judges everyone based on Judeo-Christian American standards, practices, and culture as if everything American is superior and that all others, by being different, fall below that standard. Swift's condemnation of palm reading, after his host has praised it, shows his utter lack of understanding and diplomacy. Swift's cultural ignorance is the equivalent of shouting English to foreigners to be understood. He is also too stupid to recognize the effect of his actions. Swift is an echo of Sears and Bing and the other career diplomats who completely undermine America's interests abroad. Swift's incompetence destroys a valuable opportunity and this foreshadows another greater lost opportunity told in the next chapter.

Chapter 16, "Captain Boning, USN"

Chapter 16, "Captain Boning, USN" Summary

Solomon Asch serves as the head of the American Delegation to the Special Armament section of the Asia Conference. He is charged with determining which weapons the United States will share with its Asian allies. Asch assesses his team. He has to rely on men like Navy Captain Boning for specific information on weapons and whether or not certain information is classified. Anderson, the Special Political Officer for Southeastern Pacific Affairs, is more dedicated to cocktail parties than diplomatic progress. Ambassador Dooling is equally useless. Also on his team is Ambassador MacWhite, whom Asch sees as useful. Asch reins them in with specific instructions on when and how to speak during the negotiations. Asch orders the Americans to avoid the cocktail parties and to attend only a few of the dinner parties. Asch arranges for translators so that the Asian delegates can hear the speeches in their own language instead of in French or English. This is a break in tradition that the Asians appreciate. Asch defers political questions to Ambassador MacWhite.

After the first meeting, Asch listens to criticism from the French and the British. He then declares that though they have had more experience with the Asians, they have botched things for generations. He tells the French and the British that he will treat the Asians as equals and that to treat them any other way will lead to disaster. In the second week of the conference, Asch notices that the Asians are balking. They interpret Boning's sleepiness and slow answers as holding back information. At the end of the day, Asch confronts Boning by asking him if he's living it up too much. Boning denies going to parties. Boning has, in fact, taken up his evenings with Doctor Ruby Tsung, a professor at Hong Kong University. At first, she serves as a guide to shopping and dining. Later, Boning strays from his marriage and sleeps with Tsung.

On the third week of the conference, the Indian delegation asks about the safety of thermonuclear weapons, specifically about the possibility of an accident in handling the materials. Asch needs Boning to answer quickly and firmly that the weapons will not detonate by fires or even in a plane crash, but Boning is barely awake. He hesitates in his answer, which convinces the Asians that the Americans are not being fully honest with them. Asch concludes the negotiations and, in his report to Washington, he accepts responsibility for the failure of the talks. Because of the conference, American military bases will not be approved in certain Asian countries.

Chapter 16, "Captain Boning, USN" Analysis

Named after the famous wise man of the Bible, Solomon Asch is given authority in negotiating with Asian allies. His expert negotiations are completely undermined by the incompetence of Captain Boning, who did not value his role in the negotiations above his personal interests. Just as great successes can come from little things, great failures

can come from the little things. Because of one weak link, the chain breaks. Just as Swift undermined Hillandale's effort to influence the King, Boning undermines progress with Asian allies. Both men serve not as leaders but as support staff. Both men, through carelessness and stupidity, destroy the plans of their leaders.

Chapter 17, "The Ugly American"

Chapter 17, "The Ugly American" Summary

Homer Atkins prides himself on his engineering skills and on the fact that he is worth three million dollars thanks to the work of his hands. Invited to Vietnam to validate the need for large engineering projects, he stands in a room with French, Vietnamese, and American officials who demand to know where to build sturdy roads and dams. Atkins has done thorough research in the countryside and he tells them that Vietnam does not need new roads and dams as much as it needs canning factories and brick and quarry companies. The French have a concession to handle the production of building materials, so they object to Atkins' advice. Atkins asks how many of the men in the room have been out in the countryside. None have. As proof that the officials are out of touch with their people, he informs them that the Communists have constructed a huge secret road from China through the mountainous jungle terrain to Dien Bien Phu to run military supplies. The meeting turns to chaos. The French denounce the road as impossible. Atkins walks out in disgust.

Ambassador MacWhite, there as an observer, catches up with Atkins. Over drinks, MacWhite invites Atkins to Sarkhan to solve a problem of irrigating the hillside rice paddies. Atkins sketches plans for a pump for fifteen minutes. MacWhite watches silently. When Atkins looks up from his sketch, he asks if he would be allowed to publish his designs in a magazine so the good ideas would not be tied up with trade agreements, patents and royalties and made out of the reach of the people. MacWhite leaves him a note that his orders would be cabled as soon as possible. Atkins resumes his sketching.

Chapter 17, "The Ugly American" Analysis

Atkins is a common man with common sense. Like dairy farmer Colvin, Atkins does thorough research that is refuted by authorities. His words do not reinforce the plans of those in authority, so the authorities dismiss him. MacWhite, however, hears him and invites him to Sarkhan to solve an engineering problem there. Atkins, ever the engineer, sets his mind to the challenge. Atkins fits the mold of the best representative of American values and policies because he shuns the bureaucracy in favor of direct, meaningful action. Atkins is a millionaire who values making a difference over all else.

Chapter 18, "The Ugly American and the Ugly Sarkhanese"

Chapter 18, "The Ugly American and the Ugly Sarkhanese" Summary

Two weeks after Atkins met with MacWhite, he and his wife, Emma, move into a cottage in the suburbs of Haidho. Their only servant is a boy named Ong who appears every morning at six and spends the day following Emma. Emma learns the language slowly and tends to her own chickens and garden. Homer Atkins designs his pump to use local bamboo for pipes. He adapts an abandoned jeep motor to serve as the pump mechanism, but he is stumped by what to use as a power source to run the pump. He and Emma discuss bringing in a railroad hand pump from the States, but Atkins says, "Whenever you give a man something for nothing the first person he comes to dislike is you. If the pump is going to work at all, it has to be their pump, not mine." Emma suggests powering the pump with a bicycle. With millions of bicycles in the country, it seems the perfect solution. Atkins holes up at his drawing board for hours where he designs a working model. Emma reminds her husband that it will take diplomacy to get the first pump operating and then she describes her plan.

Atkins drives to the poor village of Chang 'Dong set on a steep hill where he addresses the village's headman in halting Sarkhanese. He proposes to develop and patent his pump and he offers to share the profit with a Sarkhanese mechanic willing to help him. Atkins also offers to pay the wages of the mechanic during the construction of the pump. The headman agrees and brings in a short stocky man nicknamed Jeepo because of his skill in repairing jeeps. Jeepo demonstrates an instinctive talent for mechanics. Atkins delivers bamboo pipes, pump, and bicycle parts that Jeepo assembles on his own into the working pump. By the time Jeepo climbs onto the bike and starts pedaling, a few elders arrive to watch. The elders are excited to see water pumped into the terrace, filling it in a few minutes. The elders exclaim that it would have taken men five hours to fill the terrace by traditional bucket brigade.

Jeepo balks about using bicycle parts because they are so expensive. Atkins bites his tongue and asks if they could use salvaged bicycles. Jeepo explains that bicycles get used until they are beyond repair and beyond the point where they would be usable to power such pumps. The elders interpret Jeepo's lack of enthusiasm as rudeness. The elders see the immediate benefit of the pump so they apologize to Atkins. Atkins and Jeepo ignore the headman and elders because the mechanically minded men are trying to engineer the pump to suit the needs of the nation and not just the needs of the village. Jeepo and Atkins share an unspoken evaluation of the pump system, occasionally pointing to parts and shaking their heads. By nightfall, Jeepo solves the problem. He proposes using a treadmill to mount the bicycle on so that the bicycle can be removed for transportation.

Atkins announces to the headman that Jeepo has made a great discovery. The headman and the elders oppose the partnership because they doubt that a white man will work as hard as Jeepo to earn half of the profits. Jeepo declares that this white man, Atkins, is different from the other white men because he works with his hands. Jeepo and Atkins agree to produce the pump systems and to freely publish the plans for them. Atkins declares that the village of Chang 'Dong will become famous for its mechanical skills. Within a week, the villagers convert an old warehouse into a production plant. At times, Atkins and Jeepo yell at one another. This behavior entertains the villagers because they see Jeepo and Atkins treating each other as equals, as true business partners.

Meanwhile, Emma Atkins moves into the village and makes friends with the other women of the village.

An advisor from the American Embassy visits the plant and warns Atkins that he should not work alongside the natives on the basis that other colonizers have never allowed the locals to handle machinery. Atkins bluntly rebuffs the advisor and returns to his work. At the end of six weeks, the plant produces twenty-three pumps, and then Jeepo and Atkins host a meeting in which they recruit villagers to take the pumps to other villages to demonstrate and sell them. Twelve men agree to the radical idea of earning a commission for their sales. Contracts are drawn up and signed. The next day the salesmen haul the sample pump systems out of town on oxcarts. Jeepo and Atkins wait four days. On the fifth day, one salesman returns. He apologizes for not bringing back his two sample pumps. He says that buyers demanded his two sample pumps immediately to save their crops. He has orders for eight more pumps. The entire village erupts in celebration.

Chapter 18, "The Ugly American and the Ugly Sarkhanese" Analysis

The Ugly American of the title refers not to the brutish behavior of foreigners abroad but to the beloved engineer, Atkins, who fashioned water pumps with Jeepo. In contrast to the wealthy politically connected Ambassadors who live in luxury and isolation, Atkins represents the hard-working common American who has dirt under his fingernails. The Ugly American is the common man who reaches out his calloused hand to help his foreign neighbor overcome the problems that affect his daily life. The very man turned down by the Foreign Service recruiters as a crackpot is the man who revolutionizes farming practices in Sarkhan.

The villagers understand hard work because they have been laboring the same way for centuries. Atkins understands the free market economy and modern engineering. When Atkins and Jeepo join forces, they accomplish more than establishing a business; they improve the way of life of the nation. They introduce modern engineering concepts and business concepts that liberate the poor villagers from tedious manual labor and poverty. Atkins reaches the true needs of the people and wins their support by treating them as equals instead of as inferiors. He gives the poor hope and the means to

improve their lives whereas the Communists offer false promises and suppression. Atkins doesn't speak Sarkhanese fluently but his actions speak for him eloquently. He is a man who makes a huge positive difference. Atkins succeeds in part because he does not heed the advice of the embassy authorities to maintain a traditional distance and superior mindset over the natives. Atkins demonstrates his passion and his character by doing what he believes is right and by ignoring the bigoted naysayers.

Chapter 19, "The Bent Backs of Chang 'Dong"

Chapter 19, "The Bent Backs of Chang 'Dong" Summary

Emma Atkins is as straightforward as her husband. She notices that all the old people of the village walk stooped over so she asks why. The villagers tell her that that's the way it is. In searching for an answer, Emma notices that the villagers make their own brooms using coconut palm fronds as bristles attached to reeds with two-foot stalks as handles. These makeshift brooms require bending over to sweep. Emma proposes making a longer handle to sweep without hunching over, but wood is scarce, so Emma searches for months for an alternative material to make longer broom handles. Along the side of the road forty miles from the village, Emma finds a reed with a five-foot stalk, a longer reed than the kind the villagers use. Emma plants the longer reeds in her yard. Later when she has some of the village women over for tea, she casually fashions a broom handle from the long reed and ties it to coconut fronds to make a broom. She sweeps her floor, her front porch, and the walkway while the women gape. The villagers have never seen anyone sweep standing up.

In the days that follow, villagers gather to watch Emma sweep. Finally, an old man asks Emma where he can find a broom like hers. Emma offers reeds from her garden, but the old man answers that others would make the same request, leaving her with none. Emma then tells the man where she found the reeds and that one could bring back a year's supply on the back of one water buffalo. The man immediately rounds up people to go gather the long reeds.

Four years later, when Homer and Emma Atkins live in Pittsburgh, they get a letter from the headman of the village of Chang 'Dong. In the letter, the headman thanks the 'wife of the engineer' for the lucky accident of her long-handled broom and how it has changed the lives of the villagers. He credits her discovery for the few bent backs in the village. He writes that the villagers constructed a small shrine to honor her.

Chapter 19, "The Bent Backs of Chang 'Dong" Analysis

Emma sweeps away a centuries' old tradition of suffering when she designs a longer broom handle for the villagers. Much like her husband, Emma employs quiet diplomacy to show the Sarkhanese a better way of life. In her own way, she demonstrates engineering skill by designing a better broom. She graciously converts the villagers from the mindset of the traditional 'we've always done it that way' to a mindset of accepting change. Though small, this change drastically improves the lives of every villager so

they honor Emma in their way by creating a small shrine. Again, the refrain of doing small things to make a difference rings true.

Chapter 20, "Senator, Sir..."

Chapter 20, "Senator, Sir..." Summary

Senator Jonathan Brown's campaign for the U.S. Senate was funded primarily by an electric company that deposited $150,000 on the agreement that Brown would turn over the entire power output of the Elk Heart Dam to the company. In his second term, Senator Brown grows a conscience and introduces the bill that takes the dam's output away from the electric company. When he becomes a member of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, he does not even know which continent Cambodia is on but he sets up an expensive fact-finding tour of Asia and the Far East and parts of Europe with his entourage and with another Senator. He plans to find out for himself how the receiving countries are using billions in U.S. aid money.

The U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, Arthur Alexander Gray, receives advance warning of Brown's visit from a friend at the State Department. The friend warns Gray that Brown will go out of his way to talk to locals and will base his decisions on what he learns from them. Brown, the friend reports, returned from a trip to Ghana and then recommended a ten percent cut on the funding to that country because he said too much of it was going toward administrative overhead. The friend says that Brown studies the countries he visits and strives for honesty, but it would be best to orchestrate his exposure to the country.

Ambassador Gray briefs his staff on Brown's upcoming visit to Vietnam. The staff schedules the itinerary to show off the agricultural projects funded by the U.S. They also propose to cut and splice a film to show the military needs of the French in fighting the Communists. Gray commands the staff to arrive early and work late to show the Senator how seriously they take their work. He urges them to ride bicycles instead of driving cars. Dr. Hans Barre is charged with translating Vietnamese for the Senator so that the Senator hears only the things that support the Embassy's policies and positions. The military attachy for the Embassy, Major Ernest Cravath, is charged with touring with the Senator so that he sees what the embassy wants him to see.

Senator Brown is greeted at Ten-San Airport in Saigon by the American Ambassador Gray, the French commissioner-General, Dr. Barre, and Major Cravath. When Gray welcomes Brown, he apologizes that the French generals are busy in the field and unable to appear. The Senator says that the field is where the generals belong. Gray then lies that the embassy has made no specific itinerary because they first want to know the Senator's wishes. The Senator challenges the Ambassador to help him meet with native political leaders or take him to a downtown hotel to arrange his own itinerary. Gray offers to set up an itinerary to meet the Senator's desires.

At dinner, the embassy shows a film on the Indo-China situation. The Senator demands to know how much it cost the Americans to produce the film. The information officer

states that it was prepared on voluntary time from French and American documentaries. Satisfied, the Senator retires to bed.

The next day Major Cravath and Dr. Barre escort Senator and Mrs. Brown to the French military base using a weapons-carrier in which the shocks were removed. The French stage a rifle training exercise with Vietnamese. The Senator asks one of the trainees how many times he's fired his rifle. Dr. Barre changes the man's answer to cover the fact that the man is actually a cook. Dr. Barre reports that the man has worked with the rifle for weeks but has not fired it due to a shortage of shells. The Senator snaps to a judgment that more shells are needed. The French officer pleads that the shells must be saved for killing Communists. The Senator is completely clueless that the type of rifle used in the staged practice is useless in jungle warfare. The group dines on a meager soldier's rations and Mrs. Brown returns to the ambassador's residence. The group tours on foot for hours. Senator Brown asks to return to the ambassador's residence so an American sergeant drives him back through the city. The Senator spots a French officer and an American officer drunk and in uniform at an outdoor cafy. Senator Brown stops the car and upbraids the officers for their conduct.

The officers are Tex Wolcheck and Major Monet, fresh from their disastrous meeting with the high-ranking military commanders. Brown accuses the men of mocking the serious effort of the war. Tex Wolcheck gives the Senator a choice—he has five seconds to either get back in his car or shut up and get drunk with them—or he'll get his ass kicked back to his car. Brown is so stunned he does not move until Tex stands. Brown returns to his car. At the embassy, he reports the conduct of the officers to the ambassador who assures him that disciplinary action will be taken.

The next day Brown is taken to an outpost bunker. There Major Cravath and a French general convince Brown that the Communists can overtake the bunker by sacrificing masses of soldiers. The Communists, the officers explain, consider their soldiers to be as expendable as cigarette butts. The other weakness in holding the bunker is having the bunker under equipped. That evening, the French invite the Browns for a lavish 'French family' dinner that lasts three hours. After much food and wine and the Senator's favorite sour-mash Whiskey, the Commissioner-General shows the Senator gruesome black and white photos of the battles. The Frenchman then says that they need money because the soldiers cannot fight with their bare hands.

The next day the French fly Senator Brown over the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and then they land outside of Hanoi and take a limousine back toward town. On the way they pass a line of North African troops, and the Senator demands to know why the French have not recruited Vietnamese to fight their war. The French insist that the Vietnamese are undisciplined, unsuitable for being soldiers. The Senator says that if the Vietnamese make poor soldiers, then who are the Communists using as soldiers? Major Cravath and the French general lie that the Communists use Chinese soldiers. The Senator asks to speak with the Communist prisoners to learn the truth but he is redirected from the prisoners' stockade to a lavish luncheon with military officers who engage the Senator in conversation. After lunch, the French general and Dr. Barre offer to take Senator Brown to the stockade through an arduous muddy path. Walking the other way

on the path toward Hanoi are droves of villagers carrying their possessions. Senator Brown insists on talking to one of the villagers, an old woman, so Dr. Barre offers her a cigarette. She stops to smoke it and listens to Dr. Barre ask Brown's question—why are you running from the Communists? The woman answers that the Communists killed her oldest son six months ago. The French, she says, burned down her village to make a firing range so she is homeless. Dr. Barre translates the woman's answer for Senator Brown to say that the woman trusts the French to protect her and she fears the Communists would slaughter her. Satisfied he has enough information, Senator Brown says he doesn't need to go to the stockade. They return to Hanoi and attend a banquet. The next morning they fly back to Saigon where they inspect military facilities and attend a cocktail party and banquet. After another week, the Senator and his entourage fly back to the States. For a moment on the flight, the Senator realizes he has spoken with only two natives and only two men below the rank of general. This causes him to doubt the veracity of his impressions, but he shrugs off his doubt and falls to sleep.

On the floor of the Senate, Senator Corona of New Mexico argues that the war in Vietnam has been a complete waste of the four billion dollars given to the French because they are losing the war. Senator Corona backs up his assessment with statements from Ambassador MacWhite that the Vietnamese hate the French because the French care more about making money in Vietnam than in developing the country. He points out that the French have to bring in troops from North Africa because the Vietnamese refuse to fight under their command. MacWhite's comments were given in a secret meeting, but Corona reveals them to make his point to congress. Senator Brown then takes the floor and denounces all of Ambassador MacWhite's statements as untrue. Brown then offers his own assessment of the value of the war in Vietnam based on his brief visit to the country.

Chapter 20, "Senator, Sir..." Analysis

Senator Brown makes a show of getting at the truth; but in essence, he has simply spent a fortune on a lavish vacation at government expense. The embassy staff and the vested interests play him like a cheap violin. Others have elaborately controlled him, yet he believes he is in control.

Though MacWhite gave his comments in secret and in good faith to Senator Corona, they are blurted out to the congress. Congressmen are known for exploiting or leaking secret information when it suits their purpose. Senator Corona has good intentions and true information from a credible source, but none of it matters when weighed against the word of a popular Senator. No one questions that a Senator could learn more in a few weeks than an Ambassador who has spent months in the area. It is the game of politics played for keeps. Impressions mean more than the weight of contrary evidence. Style wins out over substance in this political arena.

Chapter 21, "The Sum of Tiny Things"

Chapter 21, "The Sum of Tiny Things" Summary

Back in Sarkhan, Ambassador MacWhite dreads the onslaught of the foreign news reporters. They challenge him to defend his statements against the statements of Senator Brown. Three weeks after Senator Brown denounced MacWhite's assessment of the situation in Vietnam, MacWhite receives a letter from the Secretary of State. In the letter, the Secretary of State lists four issues on MacWhite's record of service: 1) reporting that the embassy staff had been infiltrated by communists, 2) receiving two complaints from other ambassadors about MacWhite's conduct, 3) a request to remove George Swift because he would not allow an Air Force Colonel to read the King's palm, and 4) his testimony to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee about a country to which he is not an official ambassador.

MacWhite writes a letter to the Secretary of State promising himself that if the Secretary of State disagrees with his letter then he will resign. MacWhite's letter addresses the effectiveness of the tiny battles the Communists win in every part of Asia by winning the hearts of villagers. He describes the multitude of small decisions by the Americans that inadvertently aid the Communists. He contrasts the ineffectiveness of the 300 Americans who have served in the embassy against the amazing results of five civilian Americans (a Catholic priest, an engineer, an Air Force Colonel, a Major from Texas and a dairy farmer) in fighting the Communist influence. MacWhite makes six recommendations based on the success models of the effectiveness of the five men he lists. The recommendations are: 1) train every American serving in the country to write and speak Sarkhanese, 2) require that any American who moves to Sarkhan stay at least two years and live in housing normal to the area and eat food from local stores, 3) remove the American PX and offer only limited supplies that cannot be obtained locally, 4) insist that Americans in Sarkhan travel by official transportation for official business and use local means of transportation for private use, with there being no importation of private cars, 5) require that all Americans serving in Sarkhan read the works of Mao Tse-Tung, Lenin, Chou En-lai, Marx, Engels, and leading Asian Communists before arriving in the country, and 6) recruit workers for Foreign Service with the understanding that workers will not live in luxury or isolation, because current conditions attract mediocre people. In summary, MacWhite writes: "If we cannot get Americans overseas who are trained, self-sacrificing, and dedicated, then we will continue losing in Asia. The Russians will win without firing a shot, and the only choice open to us will be to become the aggressor with thermonuclear weapons."

MacWhite hears nothing from Washington for three weeks. He spends the time visiting the successful canning and dairy industries, the college, and the military camps set up by the role model Americans. A cablegram from Washington ends MacWhite's service with the news that his ideas are deemed impractical and that he is to be replaced by the renowned Joe Bing.

Chapter 21, "The Sum of Tiny Things" Analysis

MacWhite recognizes that fools have tarnished his image, but he is helpless to fight the entire system of good old boys who enjoy the Foreign Service perks. The incompetent majority of ambassadors and bureaucrats band together to preserve their lifestyle even if it harms American interests abroad. In a letter to the State Department, MacWhite summarizes the lessons he has learned as a series of recommendations that he knows will make the Foreign Service corps effective. The State Department dismisses his advice and replaces him with the very man identified by a prominent Asian journalist as offensive and useless—Joe Bing. Back to the status quo we go. It is ironic that the Americans strive to change the world to democracy and a free market economy but they refuse to change their own methods even when these methods prove ineffective. Only a fool will perform the same behavior again and again and expect different results. The story has come full circle-from incompetence to heroic effort, and back to incompetence. MacWhite behaves like the ideal role model and he has more authority than people like Father Finian and the engineer Atkins. He is outflanked by men of low character and replaced by the very symbol of incompetence—Joe Bing. This is a resounding condemnation of American foreign policy that illustrates the heart of the message of this novel.

Chapter 22, "A Factual Epilogue"

Chapter 22, "A Factual Epilogue" Summary

In the authors' epilogue, they assert that the fictional characters and events of the story stand for actual characters and actual events that repeat themselves throughout the U.S. Foreign Service. James Reston, reporting in the New York Times in 1858 wrote, "fifty percent of the entire Foreign Service officer corps do not have speaking knowledge of any foreign language". The authors also point out the problem of millions of servicemen abroad who do not speak the language of the country they are stationed in. They cite the ease and effectiveness of planting spies in our embassies because we staff our embassies with locals: whereas the Russians staff all of their embassies with Russians. The ignorance and arrogance of American representatives in foreign countries aid the spread of communist influence.

Chapter 22, "A Factual Epilogue" Analysis

Sadly, the situation of foreign policy blunders by Americans is as relevant today as it was in 1958 when Lederer and Burdick wrote this novel. Politicians continue to earn assignments as Ambassadors to nations in which they cannot speak or read the language and inadvertently annoy and insult the people of the nations where they serve. They bring their families along, seclude them in private schools, and live in compounds removed from the common man. Spies hired as servants continue to undermine the safety and effectiveness of our embassies. The title-seeking self-serving politicians get placed in roles of authority and decision-making at embassies, and the impressions they make in other countries may do more harm than good for America. Chapter by chapter, the book reinforces the idea that small, low cost efforts made by sincere, hard-working Americans reap the largest benefits to the American image abroad. America continues to fund costly projects, like building roads and dams, to reward political supporters instead of supporting the real needs of the people of foreign nations. Despite billions of American dollars in aid to foreign countries, America is despised by much of Asia and the Middle East.

Since this novel was written, America has lost influence in the countries featured in the story for the many small opportunities missed through lack of training and understanding. This prophetic book has been played out in history exactly as the story describes. Those who fail to learn the lessons of history repeat those mistakes. The reader becomes the common man who sees the whole picture and can only watch in horror as the events unfold exactly as predicted in this novel.

The small things make the biggest difference and such small victories are achieved through genuine selfless concern.

Characters

Apache

Apache is a Vietnamese man who fights for the French. He is captured by the communists who cut out his vocal cords.

Solomon Asch

Solomon Asch is the head of the American delegation to the Special Armament section of the Asia Conference. He is a tough and experienced negotiator.

Emma Atkins

Emma Atkins, the wife of Homer Atkins, is a simple, straightforward woman who in her own way is as physically ugly as her husband. But also, like her husband, she has a creative and inventive mind and, in fact, supplies him with some of his best ideas. She also develops her own ideas, managing to invent a long-handled broom that the old people in Sarkhan can use in place of their short-handled brooms, which are too hard on their backs.

Homer Atkins

Homer Atkins, the □ugly American□ of the book's title, is ugly in physical appearance, not in character. A tough, blunt-spoken man, he is a highly successful retired engineer who is worth $3 million. The U.S. government consults him about building dams and military roads in Southeast Asia, but he insists that what is really needed are things that the local people can manufacture and use for themselves. His advice is ignored, but Ambassador MacWhite is impressed by him and invites him to Sarkhan. In that country, Atkins, in collaboration with a Sarkhanese man named Jeepo, invents a water pump that proves to be an immense labor-saving device for the local people. Atkins sets himself up in business with Jeepo and twelve local workers, and his enterprise is a big success.

Dr. Hans Barre

Dr. Hans Barre is a naturalized American citizen who specializes in Oriental languages. He is on temporary duty at the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam and acts as interpreter during the visit of Senator Brown.

Joe Bing

Joe Bing, an American information officer living in Burma, is a gregarious, sociable man who is very popular amongst other Americans and Westerners, but he is also the kind of American disliked by Asians, since he is loud and ostentatious in his manner and does not mix with the local people. Asians are not invited to his diplomatic parties, at which there is always plenty of alcohol. He appears to think that representing the United States abroad is more about having a good time than in promoting U.S. national interests. When Gilbert MacWhite resigns as ambassador to Sarkhan, Bing is nominated by the State Department to take his place.

Captain Boning

Captain Boning is a Navy officer who takes part in the negotiations in Hong Kong about the placing of U.S. nuclear weapons on Asian soil. During the time of the conference, Boning has an affair with a local Chinese woman who is also a communist agent, and he spends most of his nights with her. Thus he is not alert during the conference sessions, and he gives hesitant answers to questions from the Asian delegates, which makes them think that the Americans are hiding something.

Senator Jonathan Brown

Senator Jonathan Brown, a tough and experienced U.S. senator, started his career as a corrupt man who granted favors to corporations in exchange for financial contributions to his campaign. But once in the Senate he changed his ways and became a man of integrity. As a member of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, he visits many countries in Southeast Asia to see for himself what is being done with U.S. aid. But in Vietnam his desire to meet and talk to the local people is thwarted by the plans of the embassy staff, who ensure that he talks only to military and government officials. The result is that he never does find out the real situation, but he fails to realize this.

John Colvin

John Colvin is an American who was an Office of Strategic Services (OSS) agent in Sarkhan during World War II. After the war he ran his family's business in Wisconsin, buying bulk milk and drying it into powder. In 1952, he returns to Sarkhan because he hears that the country is leaning towards communism, and he is convinced the situation is being handled badly. He tries to help the local people by selling them milk made from powder. But he runs afoul of a former friend of his named Deong, who has turned communist. Deong tricks some local women into believing that Colvin is trying to put an aphrodisiac in the milk so that he can seduce local girls. The women beat him up, almost killing him. Colvin returns to the United States but later goes back to Sarkhan and succeeds in his milk enterprise.

Jim Davis

Jim Davis, a black man from Los Angeles, is serving in the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam. He is captured by the Vietnamese, who gouge out one of his eyes.

Deong

Deong is a Sarkhanese communist who betrays his old friend John Colvin.

Donald

Donald is an old Chinese servant who has given many years of loyal service to the U.S. Embassy in Sarkhan. He does not read or write and knows almost no English. Ambassador MacWhite trusts Donald completely. However, it transpires that Donald is not quite what he appears. Through interrogation, Li Pang discovers that Donald has been passing along information from the embassy to the communists.

Father Finian

Father Finian is a Catholic priest from Boston who is assigned to Burma. A Jesuit, Father Finian has a fine intellect and is a scholar, but he is also tough-minded and practical, and he relishes the challenge of combating communism in Burma. He regards communism as an evil ideology. Father Finian makes a point of learning the local language and eating the local food, even though at first he finds it very hard to digest. He recruits nine local men who are also anticommunist Catholics and asks them what strategy they want to pursue. He does not make the mistake of imposing his own views but encourages the men to make their own decisions. Eventually, Father Finian establishes a four-year college in Burma, at which the curriculum includes study of the writings of both communist and Western leaders.

Ambassador Arthur Alexander Gray

Arthur Alexander Gray is the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam. When Senator Jonathan Brown visits, Gray makes extensive preparations with his staff to ensure that the senator only has access to the information the embassy thinks he ought to have.

Colonel Edwin B. Hillandale

Edwin B. Hillandale, a U.S. Air Force colonel, was sent to Manila, in the Philippines, in 1952. He is extremely popular with the local people because he embraces their culture. His love of jazz and his skill with the harmonica earn him the nickname The Ragtime Kid. He is not so popular, however, with the officials at the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines. But Ambassador MacWhite recognizes Hillandale's worth and invites him to

Sarkhan. Hillandale's knowledge of palmistry, which is valued in the local culture, stands him in good stead at a dinner party given by the Philippine ambassador.

Thomas Elmer Knox

Thomas Elmer Knox, an American farmer from Iowa who lives for a while in Cambodia, knows more Cambodians than any other Westerner, and he loves Cambodian food. In Iowa, he raises chickens, and he is full of ideas about how the local people can improve the quality of their chickens and increase the chickens' egg yield. But when he puts his ideas to American and Cambodian agricultural experts, as well as some French officials, he gets nowhere. The officials are only interested in developing canals and mechanized farms. Tom is angry at their refusal to listen to him, but after some high-level diplomats and businessmen treat him to luxury trips to Paris, Indonesia, and India, he forgets all about his good ideas for Cambodia.

Louis Krupitzyn

Louis Krupitzyn is the Russian ambassador to Sarkhan. Unlike his American counterpart, Ambassador Sears, Krupitzyn is well prepared for his position. He began his diplomatic career in 1935 and has been stationed in the United States and China. When he becomes ambassador to Sarkhan he learns the language, immerses himself in the local culture, and attends lectures on Buddhist religion and practice. He outwits the Americans when he tricks the Sarkhanese into believing that a shipment of U.S. rice, sent to relieve a famine, in fact came from Russia.

Jeepo

Jeepo is a Sarkhanese man who has a talent for working with machinery. He gets on well with Homer Atkins, and the two of them develop a water pump for raising water economically and efficiently. They try various versions of the pump, and it is Jeepo who points out their shortcomings to Atkins. He is not intimidated by working with an American, and the two men argue as equals. It is Jeepo who comes up with the final version of the water pump, solving a problem that had eluded Atkins.

Ruth Jyoti

Ruth Jyoti, editor and publisher of one of the best independent newspapers in Southeast Asia, is invited to the United States, and at a dinner for the press in San Francisco she gives a talk on how and why Americans in Asia are not effective.

Marie MacIntosh

Marie MacIntosh, a twenty-eight-year-old American, is impressed by a talk given by Joe Bing and applies for a position in government service in Sarkhan. She writes back to her friends about her new, rather luxurious and easy life.

Ambassador Gilbert MacWhite

Gilbert MacWhite replaces Louis Sears as U.S. ambassador to Sarkhan in 1954. Quite unlike his predecessor, MacWhite is a professional foreign service officer, and he has a long diplomatic career already behind him, even though he is only in his mid-forties. MacWhite has read the communist writings of Karl Marx and Lenin and is a recognized expert on Soviet theory and practice. He learns Sarkhanese and reads books about Sarkhanese history and politics. He is courageous, efficient, and imaginative, and has an ability to recognize and learn from his mistakes, an ability his predecessor conspicuously lacked. He travels extensively in Southeast Asia because he is determined to learn everything he can about how to defeat communism. He has good judgment and invites some of the best American talent, such as Homer Atkins and Colonel Hillandale, to visit Sarkhan and put their ideas into practice. When he is well established in his job, he writes to the U.S. secretary of state asking permission to make some urgent and practical changes in the U.S. diplomatic mission to Sarkhan. He is turned down, and as a result he resigns as ambassador.

Bob Maile

Bob Maile is an official in the United States Information Service (USIS) stationed in Setkya, a city in Southeast Asia. According to Ruth Jyoti, Maile has done more than anyone else to raise U.S. prestige in the area. He mixes easily with the local people and everyone trusts him. He even sends his children to an Asian school, which is very unusual for an American.

Major Monet

Major Monet is a French soldier in Hanoi, in charge of a company of French foreign legion. He comes from a long line of soldiers in his family, and he understands the art of war, at least in its traditional form. But his legionnaires keep losing their skirmishes with the communists. It is left to Major Wolchek to point out to Monet that he needs to study the works of Mao Tse-tung, since Mao describes a new kind of warfare. As a proud Frenchman, Monet is reluctant at first, but he later realizes the value in Wolchek's advice.

Prince Ngong

Prince Ngong is a distinguished Sarkhanese poet and drama critic and member of the government. He tells the Sarkhanese cabinet that they must do something to remedy the offense that Ambassador Sears has taken from a hostile cartoon in one of the local newspapers.

Li Pang

Li Pang, a businessman and soldier, is a representative of Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese nationalist leader. He is also an old friend of Ambassador MacWhite. While visiting MacWhite, Li Pang interrogates Donald, the old Chinese servant, and finds that he has been passing on information to the communists.

Roger

Roger is one of the two old Chinese servants at the U.S. Embassy in Sarkhan.

Ambassador Louis Sears

Louis Sears is the U.S. ambassador to Sarkhan. Known as □Lucky□ because of the good fortune he enjoyed during his long political career, he is a former U.S. senator. He is only in Sarkhan for two years while he waits for a vacancy to arise for a federal judgeship. While he is ambassador, Sears does not bother to learn the Sarkhanese language, nor does he make any attempt to mingle with the Sarkhanese people, so he has little idea of what is really going on in the country. He spends too much of his time attending cocktail parties and talking to other diplomats. Sears is presented as an example of all that is wrong with U.S. diplomacy in Southeast Asia. The Russians regard him as so incompetent that they are eager for him to remain in his position, since his presence helps them so much. Sears eventually gets his judgeship and is replaced as ambassador by Gilbert MacWhite.

U Maung Swe

U Maung Swe is the best known journalist in Burma. In 1954, at dinner in honor of Ambassador MacWhite, U Maung Swe explains in detail why U.S. prestige in Southeast Asia is low.

George Swift

George Swift is the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Sarkhan. He is responsible for sabotaging Colonel Hillandale's appointment to read the palm of the king of Sarkhan. Hillandale is so angry he punches him, and Ambassador MacWhite,

sensing that Swift has no understanding of the local culture, arranges for him to be transferred.

Major James Wolchek

Major James Wolchek, whose nickname is □Tex□ because he comes from Texas, is a combat veteran of World War II and the Korean War. He was wounded in both wars. In 1954, he is assigned as a foreign observer to the French foreign legion in Hanoi, Vietnam, where he meets Major Monet. After the French suffer a series of defeats at the hands of the communists, Tex realizes that their failure results from their fighting war by the old rules, while the communists follow the new rules of war written by Mao Tse-tung. Tex explains Mao's battle tactics, and, as a result, Monet and the legionnaires finally win an encounter with the communists, during which Tex is slightly wounded.

Objects/Places

Sarkhan

This fictional Asian country lies near enough to Vietnam, Burma, and China to be affected by their economic and political struggles. Infiltrated by Communists, the country divides itself village by village while the American Embassy gradually becomes aware of the situation. The Sarkhanese live in a centuries-old tradition of farming with oxen and terraced rice farming. They are being left behind socially, technologically, politically, and economically by the modern world. The Sarkhanese are suspicious of foreigners and change because they are predominantly uneducated, hard-working people who live off the land. The terrain is mountainous with villages connected by footpaths and a few muddy roads. The capitol city is Haidho.

Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam

The battle in this village serves as a symbol of the larger struggle between invading Communists and the Western forces that try to protect the natives. The natives are themselves divided in their loyalties, so their allies fight in vain. The Vietnamese hate their French allies more than they fear the Communists. The Communists have already infiltrated the village long before the battle, so the allies are shocked and unprepared for attack from all sides. The French lose the battle because they completely underestimate the intelligence and tactics of their enemy.

Chang 'Dong, Sarkhan

This poor hillside village represents the Asian peoples. The hard-working, poorly educated farmers struggle against nature to scratch out a living. Their methods are centuries old and though they are ineffective, the villagers have no access to the modern world outside their jungle. They plod on as they always have because they don't know any other way to live. This place is the setting for one of the great successes of American influence when the engineer Atkins introduces a pump system to lift river water to the hillside rice paddies.

The Home of the American Ambassador to Sarkhan

Both Ambassador Sears and Ambassador MacWhite shared a false sense of security and privacy in the Ambassador's residence. In their western mindset, home is a safe place. Only MacWhite discovers that spies posing as servants have violated the sanctity of his home. The discovery of the spies alerts MacWhite to the larger danger of infiltration at American Embassies and homes around the world.

The Long-handle Broom

The long-handle broom that Emma Atkins introduces to the people of Chang 'Dong is one of the little, great things that improves the lives of the natives. The natives break from tradition and suffering when Emma demonstrates a better way to sweep.

The Pump

The Jeepo-Atkins Company, Limited breaks the image of Americans as lazy people out to exploit the Sarkhanese. Homer Atkins and Jeepo are like-minded mechanically skilled men who respect one another as equals. Atkins is a trained engineer and Jeepo is a self-trained mechanic with a strong aptitude for machinery. The pump draws the farming methods of the Sarkhanese into the next century, yet it is not a simple foreign import of technology. It is created out of cheap, readily available materials. The pump design is given freely to others instead of sold to the natives for foreign profit.

Mao Tse-Tung's booklet on War

The Communists have published their tactics of warfare but the Westerners discount it as inferior to the writings of European military experts. By assuming the Western ways have to be superior, the Westerners doom themselves to frustration and defeat. Two low ranking officers, Major Monet and Tex Wolcheck, study it and use it to defeat the Communists in a single battle. When they report their success and their findings to the commanding admirals and generals, they are scoffed and dismissed. The leaders fail to recognize that they could use this military playbook to their advantage and soon after, they lose the war.

Hillandale's Harmonica

Through his informal diplomacy, Hillandale uses an American musical instrument to play native tunes. He wins the hearts of the natives because he knows that they love music. He plays their music in a new way, forming a bridge between his way of life and theirs.

Wolcheck's Weapon

American military observer, Tex Wolcheck, advises the French to use a weapon that worked well in Korea. It is a truck that carried twenty 5-inch rocket launchers mounted in a circle. The launchers fire simultaneously, killing everyone within a hundred yards. American ingenuity is handed over to the French and they use it to great effect. Despite the success in using it, Wolcheck and Major Monet receive strong criticism from the generals and admirals because the weapon strays from traditional military tactics. The weapon is extremely effective, but like the great advice from Monet and Wolcheck, it will not be used again because it breaks Western military traditions and conventions.

Alcohol

Forbidden by Buddhists and Moslems, this drink represents one of the hundreds of things that Americans embrace that offends the Asians. Alcohol consumption also undermines the performance of the diplomats because they get it so cheaply through the PX or commissary.

Themes

American Arrogance and Failure in Southeast Asia

The purpose of the novel is to point out the ways in which the United States is failing in its attempt to defeat communism in Southeast Asia and to explain the alternative methods that must be adopted in order to succeed. In brief, the United States is in danger of losing the cold war in this part of the world because it relies on a complacent political and bureaucratic establishment that fails to understand the local culture and relies on large-scale foreign aid programs that do not address the real needs of the people. Each story in the book illustrates some aspect of this or related themes, showing an American who is either part of the problem or part of the solution.

First among those who put U.S. enterprise at risk is Ambassador Sears. Sears has no training for his position, which is handed to him by the leader of the Democratic Party merely out of political loyalty. Sears knows nothing about the country to which he is assigned and makes little attempt to find out. He spends his time at social events, entertaining visiting American politicians and military men, and never meets any of the local people. He also forbids any of his staff to go into the local villages. In spite of the fact that he is despised by the locals and outwitted by the Russians, he believes that his relations with the Sarkhanese □couldn't be better.□ He has no grasp of the seriousness of the communist threat in Sarkhan, and there is an unconscious irony in his letter to the U.S. State Department in which he dismisses the prospect of a communist takeover: □I get around at one hell of a lot of social functions, and official dinners out here, and I've never met a native Communist yet.□

Similarly Joe Bing, the information officer, thinks the situation is positive. Americans in the region regard him as a charming man who knows everyone in Setkya, but he is viewed very differently by the locals. Ruth Jyoti says of him that far from knowing everyone, he acknowledges only those who are □European, Caucasian, western-educated, and decently dressed.□ Her description of him suggests the image of the □ugly American□ that since the book's publication has come to symbolize the worst aspects of American behavior abroad: □He drives a big red convertible, which he slews around corners and over sidewalks. And he's got exactly the kind of loud silly laugh that every Asian is embarrassed to hear.□

When Bing gives a lecture in Washington, D.C., he reveals a flaw in American recruiting strategies for foreign service. He emphasizes the easiness of the life□the perks of free housing and the availability of servants□not the challenges. Americans are not even required to learn the language of the country to which they are sent. Bing's statement reveals his ethnocentric view of the world: □Translators are a dime a dozen overseas. And besides, it's better to make the Asians learn English. Helps them too.□ The result of all this is that the Americans attract only mediocre people into foreign service.

Since few Americans bother to learn the local language most Americans end up staying in the cities, talking to others just like them□American and European diplomats, and cultured, English-speaking members of the Asian elite. This language insulation contrasts with the Russian diplomats, who all learn to speak the local language and understand the culture. The Russians go out to the countryside and the villages and work hard to get the local people on their side. They are better at propaganda and □dirty tricks□ than the Americans, as is shown when they convince the Sarkhanese that the rice delivered from the United States was in fact from Russia.

How to Win the Cold War in Southeast Asia

The success of the communists and the failure of the bureaucratic Americans is countered by those American characters who understand and respect the local people and their culture. Father Finian, for example, is the inspiration behind a small-scale black propaganda campaign in Burma, in which he helps a group of local men to publish a fake communist newspaper that undermines support for the communists. The key element in Father Finian's strategy is that he allows the local men themselves to decide what they want to do. He does not impose his views on them; he merely guides their discussions. □It is your country, your souls, your lives,□ he says. □I will do what we agree upon.□ Thus the authors criticize the prevailing attitude of Americans that they, rather than the people who actually live there, know what is best for southeast Asia.

Just as Father Finian knows how to combat communist propaganda, Major □Tex□ Wolchek is an American who understands the military demands of the struggle. Unlike the French and their American supporters, Tex realizes that the war in Indochina is a new kind of conflict that demands knowledge of guerilla warfare, as explained in the writings of Mao Tse-tung. It is no longer enough to rely on the old concepts of war as the French are trying to do. But when Tex and Ambassador MacWhite explain this to a meeting of French and American generals in Hanoi, they are met with ridicule. The words of a French general sum up the sense of cultural superiority and snobbishness that characterize the West's attitude to the region:

If you are suggesting ... that the nation which produced Napoleon now has to go to a primitive Chinese for military instruction, I can tell you that you are not only making a mistake, you're being insulting.

Another American, Colonel Hillandale, shows the importance of understanding and respecting the local culture. When Hillandale was stationed in the Philippines he □embraced everything Filipino□: the food and drink, the music, the people, and he also learned the language. When he is assigned to Sarkhan he walks the streets of Haidho and takes note of what he sees. He observes that well-qualified astrologers and palmists occupy elegant buildings, and he deduces from this the importance of such practices in the Sarkhanese culture. Had he been one of those Americans who never ventured further than the cocktail-party circuit, he might never have made this key observation. Since he has made a hobby of palmistry, he uses this knowledge to win influential local friends. Hillandale's opposite is George Swift, a diplomat at the U.S.

Embassy, who expresses what in the book is typical American cultural arrogance in dismissing something foreign that he does not understand. "A vaudeville stunt," he says of palm reading, to which Ambassador MacWhite, who is thoroughly aware of what is really required of Americans in Southeast Asia replies, "[N]othing is fake if people believe in it. Your business is not to judge whether or not things are fakes, but who believes them and why and what it means."

Other Americans, such as John Colvin and Homer and Emma Atkins, develop strategies for helping the local population with agricultural and technological projects at the grass-roots level. Like Tex, Homer Atkins comes up against the obduracy of U.S. officialdom. They seek him out as an adviser on foreign aid projects, but what they have on their minds are big technological projects such as dams, highways, and irrigation systems. These are of immediate benefit only to local politicians who use them as a means to gain wealth and power. Atkins is more aware of what the people really need, and he uses his skill, ingenuity, and perseverance to bring his idea to fruition. He respects the local people and works with them as equals, showing none of the underlying assumptions of racial superiority shown by many other Americans, such as the technical adviser to the U.S. Embassy who tells Atkins that "for white men to work with their hands, and especially in the countryside, lower[s] the reputation of all white men."

Struggle between Good (American ideals) and Evil (Communism)

This struggle is played out in every chapter of the novel with each event serving as a battle in the war. The Communists win many battles by luring in the uneducated with lies and promises just as the Devil lures people into sin. The Communists fight their war over the long term by infiltration and spying. The Americans, on the other hand, blunder in with money and great displays of force that turn out to be too little too late. The little things, the strategically planned and executed little things, determine victory.

The Russians come to battle fully armed with information, strategy, and guile. The Americans blunder in alongside the Europeans and discover they are in a battle after it is nearly won. The Communists outmaneuver the Americans, but worse than that, the Americans are undermined by their own State Department. The American foreign policies are so vague and impractical that it leaves the American diplomats disadvantaged and frustrated.

Father Finian clearly identifies Communism as a religion based on the procedures used to indoctrinate followers. The Communists demand absolute loyalty to the extent that they do not allow worship of any kind outside devotion to the State.

Appearance versus Reality

Whereas Joe Bing earns the praise of the State Department, he is the most offensive and ineffective diplomat in Asia. Everything he says ruins the image of America abroad.

Bing is style without substance. In reality, the most effective American Ambassador is Gerald MacWhite. He shuns the cocktail parties and isolationist behavior of the typical Ambassador in favor of making a real difference in improving American/Sarkhanese relations. MacWhite does not fit the profile of the party-going, politically connected diplomat. His efforts are destroyed by misinformation that gives the appearance of him as a bungling fool. He wins the admiration of prominent Asian authorities, but the State Department removes him from office.

Americans continue to plan huge expensive projects to impress the Asians when in reality the things that make the most difference are the little things: the pump that Atkins designs, the introduction of dairy products, the long-handled broom, the one-on-one common man making contact with natives and treating them as equals. The Americans continue to follow the 'more and bigger is better' philosophy in their foreign policy projects despite hearing from Asians that this approach does not work.

Tradition versus Progress

The poor Asian farmers continue traditional methods of farming that are manual, backbreaking, and slow. They cling to their traditions because they fear change and are out of touch with the rest of the world. Two prime examples of their traditions are the bucket-brigade type of irrigation of the rice paddies and the use of short-handled brooms made from coconut fronds. To their credit, the Sarkhanese accept the improvements when they see the benefits. The villagers of Chang 'Dong embrace the Jeepo-Atkins pumping system and the women convert their brooms to the longer-handle version introduced by Emma Atkins. Though these simple, uneducated peasants value their traditional way of living, they remain open to new ideas.

The French military commanders, the admirals and generals, utterly refuse to change their tactics of warfare. They continue to use their tanks and jeeps even though they bog down on the narrow muddy roads of Vietnam. They arrogantly presume that the battle tactics devised over decades of European battles have to be superior to all battle tactics. Even in the face of evidence to the contrary, when Major Monet and Tex Wolcheck win a battle using Asian military tactics, the French commanders denounce the win as if it is a fluke. The stakes for failing to adapt and change are life and death, yet the French commanders cling to their European ways all the way to defeat. On their way out of Hanoi, they are defeated and humiliated, but they depart in victorious parade fashion. They maintain their denial to the end.

The American Foreign Service clings to their useless, outdated, and ineffective ways out of tradition. Led by an uninformed State Department, the American Embassies and aid agencies fumble along on their own without clear guidance or training. The Ambassadors by and large apply Western philosophy and culture in their dealings with Asians. This approach fails repeatedly but the State Department insists on doing business the same way. These failures to adapt and to understand the Asians create such a divide that the Communists march into the gap. If only the American Foreign

Service trained its personnel with the rigor and intensity of the Russians then they could make such a difference!

Style

Parables

The Ugly American is an unusual novel in that there is only a loose connection between all the different episodes. The only semblance of a unified plot is in Ambassador Gilbert MacWhite's gradual accumulation of the knowledge about how to win the struggle against communism. Each story serves as a parable, illustrating either the folly of U.S. behavior and policy or a positive alternative. According to M. H. Abrams, a parable is □a short narrative presented so as to stress the tacit but detailed analogy between its component parts and a thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to us.□ Thus in the first story, of □Lucky□ Lou Sears, every detail contributes to the theme of the book: Americans in foreign service are not performing their jobs in a way that is likely to bring any success, but they are mostly unaware of this fact. In the third story, □Nine Friends,□ about Father Finian, every detail contributes to the opposite effect: Father Finian is one of the few men who knows how to act effectively and decisively in American interests. There are no subtle nuances in this black and white approach to story-telling. The meaning of each parable is crystal clear.

Point of View

The story is told in the third person omniscient point of view. The narrative stays crisp and objective with the point of view dipping into the minds of the characters to provide instances of insight into their motives. Largely, the story is demonstrated through action more than from inside the minds of the individual characters. This works well because there are so many characters whose stories intertwine to create a single large impression from the mosaic of small pieces. The story emphasizes the little things that contribute to the whole and the telling of the story matches this effect. There are only rare moments of narrative intrusion, such as at the end of chapter 14 when the narrator declares: "And MacWhite did give up—which was his second major mistake." The final chapter breaks the style of the rest of the novel. It is a direct address to the reader that this work of fiction is drawn from similar events in real life with the names and places changed enough to protect real people.

Setting

Most of the action takes place in Asia and the Far East where the reader sees the collective failures and successes that come from American foreign policy during the Cold War in the 1950s. The mountain and jungle terrain is as hostile and foreign to the Americans as conditions can get. The setting further emphasizes the disadvantages faced by Americans in understanding the people who live there. The simple farmer peasants of Asia are caught in the power struggle between the crafty Communists and the bungling Americans. Each of the two super powers seeks to control the political,

economic, and social future of the third world nations in Asia and the Far East. French and British colonialism has created resentment and suspicion of Westerners in these countries, which gives the Communists an advantage. Fittingly, the story ends in the place where the policies are made—in Congress. On the floor of the Senate, the reader witnesses the battle between truth and misinformation that sets the path for future American foreign policy decisions.

Language and Meaning

Told in a journalistic, lean documentary style; the language is laden with facts but sparse with descriptions. It uses a sampling of dialogue at key points in the narrative. Two organizations are referred to only though their acronyms as if they are common knowledge: USIS and ICS. The USIS is the United States Information Service. The ICA is possibly the International Communications Association because it existed in the 1950s as a link among various representatives in government, media, business law, and commerce. Lederer's background as a Navy Captain lends a tone of authenticity on the workings of bureaucracy and the differences in perspective between the common man and those in positions of political power shown in the novel.

Structure

The story is presented largely in chronological order from 1953 to 1955. Each chapter is like a piece to the larger puzzle and, though the pieces seem disjointed and unrelated at first, by the end of the story they merge into a sharp, detailed image. Each character featured as the focus of a chapter is introduced with a brief, factual biography that resembles a Who's Who listing. Ambassador MacWhite appears in more chapters than any other character and so this novel feels like it is mostly his story. A few characters, like Colonel Hillandale, the engineer Homer Atkins, and the incompetent Joe Bing, hop through a few chapters. One key encounter breaks the chronology of the narrative. This is when Senator Brown passes through Hanoi on his fact-finding tour and stops to berate Major Monet and Tex Wolcheck. The two military men are drinking to mourn the loss of the battle with the Communists and the second loss of their private battle with the admirals and generals who refuse to change their losing tactics. Wolcheck threatens to beat up the pompous, misinformed Senator and the Senator backs down. A small victory for the common man, this moment is played for maximum effect by breaking the chronology. The break in time mirrors the action in that the Senator has chosen the wrong time to assert his authority.

Historical Context

The Cold War in the 1950s

During the 1950s, and continuing until the late 1980s, global politics was dominated by the struggle between the West (the United States and its Western European allies) and the communist Soviet Union, its Eastern European allies, and China. This struggle was described as a cold war because it did not lead to direct armed conflict between the two superpowers. Instead, much of the contest was played out in the Third World, in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The United States would give economic and military support to emerging nations in these regions as a reward for any government that adopted an anti-communist stance. The Soviet Union lent support to Third-World communist parties and to communist insurgencies, which they described as wars of liberation against the retreating Western colonial powers. The Soviets denounced as imperialism any U.S. attempt to influence public opinion or government in such countries. The United States denounced Soviet aggression and claimed that the Soviets were bent on world domination.

In 1950, cold war rivalry focused on Korea, where Russian-backed North Korea invaded South Korea. The United States entered the war with United Nations support and engaged Chinese forces. After a truce in 1951 and an armistice in 1953, the United States regarded Vietnam as the next Asian country that had to be defended against communism, and it channeled huge military aid to the French, who were already battling Vietnamese communist forces. After the French defeat in 1954 (described so vividly in *The Ugly American*), the United States tried to halt any further communist advance by creating a viable South Vietnam state. It also sought stability by founding the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which in fact included only two Southeast Asian states, Thailand and the Philippines, in addition to Britain, France, New Zealand, Australia, Pakistan, and the United States. SEATO was designed to prevent the invasion of any nation in Southeast Asia by a foreign power. But as Lea Williams points out in *Southeast Asia: A History*, SEATO ignored the reality of communist advance, which was not by direct invasion but by agitation from within and by guerilla warfare; it was very unlikely that traditional methods such as full-scale invasion would take place. Williams criticizes the limitations of U.S. diplomatic and military thinking at the time that produced such an ineffective treaty as SEATO: Generals are inclined to be prepared for the last, rather than the next war; and SEATO was proof that diplomats, as exemplified by John Foster Dulles [U.S. secretary of state], can be equally hypnotized by history. This is essentially the same point made by Burdick and Lederer in their story of the French and U.S. generals who expect to be able to win a war in Indochina using outdated tactics.

The shock of the French defeat in Vietnam in 1954 was taken by the United States as a warning of what the future might hold if it did not exert all its influence in the region. The so-called domino theory which dictated U.S. policy in Southeast Asia held that if one nation went communist the others would soon follow, one by one, like falling dominoes.

The theory reflected what was perceived as the reality of the global power game, that smaller nations would be unable to avoid being drawn into the orbit of one or other of the two superpowers. If the United States did not win control, the Soviets would.

The Strategic Importance of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia was considered to be of great strategic importance for both sides in the cold war, from both an ideological point of view and because the region was rich in natural resources. Writing in 1953, political scientist Amry Vandenbosch, declared:

Control of the oil, rubber, tin, rice, and other commodities of the region would give the Communist bloc a very great advantage and the loss of these strategic materials would constitute a severe blow to the West.

In 1958, the year *The Ugly American* was published, Southeast Asia consisted of nine independent states: Thailand, Burma, Malaya, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Singapore and Borneo were still British colonies, and Timor was a Portuguese colony. In the global struggle between the West and communism, North Vietnam committed itself to Russia and China, while Thailand, the Philippines, and South Vietnam sided with the United States and accepted U.S. military aid. The remaining four nations sought to remain independent, not wanting to commit to either side, and accepted only nonmilitary aid. (This is the position of the Sarkhanese government in *The Ugly American*, whose main goal is to maintain its independence.) These neutral nations were courted by both the West and by the communists, and they accepted aid from both sides.

The criticisms of U.S. attitudes and policies in Southeast Asia made in *The Ugly American* were not uncommon at the time. For example, in *Southeast Asia and the World Today*, which was published a few months before *The Ugly American*, Claude A. Buss, professor of history at Stanford University, made a number of similar points when he reviewed relations between Southeast Asian countries and the United States. Buss reported that many people in these countries reacted with skepticism to U.S. military aid and also had reservations about economic aid, which was perceived as serving American self-interest. Buss also reported that regarding foreigners who worked in their countries, Asians regarded the Americans as mediocre; they were people who viewed their overseas posting □as an interesting experience or a good deal□as an excellent opportunity to see the world at government expense and to collect cheap, unusual souvenirs.□ Buss further states, in another passage that might have come directly from *The Ugly American*, □Asians decried the waste, the rusting machines, and the useless projects which they also helped pay for. . . . They wished that programs had been more tailored for their own needs and desires.□

Critical Overview

The Ugly American was an immediate success with the American public. It was on the bestseller list for seventy-eight weeks and went on to sell four million copies. The message of the novel seemed to strike a ready chord amongst Americans who feared that their country was not pursuing the wisest policies abroad and that the Soviet Union might be winning a decisive advantage in the cold war.

Critical reaction, however, was mixed. Robert Trumbull, in the *New York Times Book Review*, praised the □sharp characterizations, frequently humorous incident and perceptive descriptions□ in the book. He offered the opinion that it may act as a □source of insight into the actual, day-by-day by-play of [the] present titanic political struggle for Asia that will engage future historians□unless, of course, the Communists win, and suppress all such books.□ In contrast to Trumbull, Robert Hatch in *The Nation*, commented sharply on the book's □easy, surface characterizations,□ but he had some appreciation for it nonetheless: □[A]t once slick and angry; [the authors] have an awkward way of advocating decency and generosity, to say nothing of intelligence, not for their own sake but because that is the way to beat the Russian game.□

In *Yale Review*, Edward W. Mill commented that his experience as an American diplomat abroad led him to believe that there was much truth in the critique of U.S. policy offered in *The Ugly American*. He acknowledged the need for more effective training for overseas service but suggested that for such a policy change to be made, there would need to be much more support and understanding of the issue by the American people, Congress, and the nation's colleges and universities. Mill concluded: □If the American people want to be represented by the MacWhites and the Hillandales instead of 'Lucky Lou' and the Joe Bings, they will have to make their wishes clear.□

The Ugly American had a pronounced influence on the politics of the day. It was reportedly read by President Eisenhower, who then ordered an investigation of the U.S. foreign aid program. In 1959, then-Senator John F. Kennedy, who was preparing to run for president, and three other unnamed men prominent in public life, sent a copy of the book to every U.S. senator. It was not well received by all. In September, 1959, Senator William Fulbright denounced the book on the Senate floor. He claimed that there were many successful American aid projects in Southeast Asia and complained that □in the world of Lederer and Burdick, almost everything is reduced to idiot simplicity□ (quoted in John Hellman's *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*). The following year Vice President Nixon referred to *The Ugly American* in a speech at the University of San Francisco. He acknowledged that while some of the charges in the book might be partially correct, the real lesson to be absorbed was the need to understand the strategy of world communism.

One result of the popularity of the book was that the title became part of the American language. The □ugly American□ was soon in common usage and referred to a certain type of arrogant American who when abroad did not understand or respect the culture he was in and saw everything through ethnocentric eyes.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth century literature. In this essay, he discusses the novel in the context of the cold war, the Vietnam war, and the nature of the U.S. national identity and character.

Central to *The Ugly American* is the historical reality of the cold war. Behind all the individual stories lies the larger picture of a global struggle between two superpowers who embrace competing ideologies and compete ruthlessly for influence and control over smaller countries not only in Southeast Asia but all over the world. Given the fact that both superpowers have the capacity to destroy each other several times over through the use of nuclear weapons, the future of human civilization may depend on the outcome of the struggle.

Since the novel is so rooted in a particular period of history, it is impossible for readers in the early 2000s to respond to it in the same way that the original readers did, in the 1950s. In the early twenty-first century, the outcome of the cold war, far from being in doubt, is known, and that long struggle has receded into the pages of history. In fact, young people of college age in the early 2000s can have little or no direct memory of the cold war, since it wound down during the late-1980s and finally ended with the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since the United States and its allies won the cold war, and communism has completely lost the worldwide appeal it held for so many people from the 1950s to the 1980s, it is apparent from the perspective of the early 2000s that many of the fears expressed by Burdick and Lederer did not come to pass. The Soviets did not outwit or outlast the Americans. American ideas, the clarion call of freedom and democracy, proved to be more durable than the collectivist ideas of Marx and Lenin.

Tragically, however, that is only part of the story. Some of the fears expressed by the authors in *The Ugly American* did indeed come true. The United States did not learn its lessons quickly enough to avoid the catastrophe of the Vietnam War, in which over 58,000 Americans were killed from 1964 to 1973, and the nation lost a war for the first time in its history.

In connection with Vietnam, *The Ugly American* seems prescient indeed, as the two chapters, □The Iron of War□ and □The Lessons of War□ demonstrate. The French, as they battle the communist insurgency, believe that their well-trained army, equipped with all the most modern weapons of war, will surely triumph over a ragged band of poorly equipped communists. They continue to believe this, according to *The Ugly American*, even when the evidence proves them wrong, again and again. When the French finally capitulate and withdraw from Hanoi, Major Monet, who has been enlightened by his discussions with Major □Tex□ Wolchek and Gilbert MacWhite, expresses the truth as he watches the final French military parade: □No one bothered to tell the tankers that their tanks couldn't operate in endless mud. And those recoilless rifles never found an enemy disposition big enough to warrant shooting at it with them.□

Less than a decade later, the United States made the same mistake as the French, thinking that a huge army□U.S. troop numbers in Vietnam reached 543,000 in 1969□with the most sophisticated military equipment in the world would defeat an enemy that possessed almost nothing in comparison. The shock of that defeat in Vietnam continued to reverberate in the national psyche for over thirty years.

But *The Ugly American* is about more than history and the cold war and the forewarnings about Vietnam. Behind the swirl of political events in Southeast Asia, the authors ground their work in a larger issue, the nature of the U.S. national identity and character. They are very careful to draw a distinction between the real American character and the distortions of it that occur when Americans get caught abroad in the twin traps of bureaucracy and shallow conventional wisdom. When Ambassador MacWhite visits the Philippines, for example, he meets the head of the government, Ramon Magsaysay, who makes the following observation:

[A]verage Americans, in their natural state ... are the best ambassadors a country can have.... They are not suspicious, they are eager to share their skills, they are generous. But something happens to Americans when they go abroad.

Magsaysay, who, incidentally, was a real historical figure, believes that many Americans abroad are □second-raters□ who get carried away by their luxurious style of living and all the cocktail parties they attend. They lose the natural good qualities that are otherwise such a prominent feature of the national character.

The Burmese journalist U Maung Swe expresses the same idea. At a dinner party in Rangoon, he remarks that the Americans he knew in the United States □were wonderfully friendly, unassuming, and interested in the world.□ He trusted and respected them. But he continues:

The Americans I meet in my country are not the same as the ones I knew in the United States. A mysterious change seems to come over Americans when they go to a foreign land. They live pretentiously. They're loud and ostentatious. Perhaps they're frightened and defensive; or maybe they're not properly trained and make mistakes out of ignorance.

The characters in the book who accomplish something of value are presented as examples of the true American character, as opposed to the distortion of that character that seems to occur in the foreign service. These □real Americans□ are all practical men, not intellectuals. They are adventurous, creative, and ingenious. They are brave, they relish a challenge, and they are hardworking. They are also open and friendly, and not prejudiced. They speak their minds, and a rough exterior often hides a gentle heart. They are always willing to use their talents and knowledge in service of others not because they are especially religious or saintly, but because they are naturally warm and good-hearted, and they like to share what they know.

An example is John Colvin, the man who tries to help the Sarkhanese with his milk and cattle scheme and is betrayed by his former friend turned communist, Deong. Colvin is

a tough, confident, battle-hardened World War II veteran. Back home in Wisconsin, he is a successful small-businessman who runs the family milk business. When he hears that Sarkhan is in danger of going communist, he feels a sense of personal responsibility to the Sarkhanese people, whom he had learned to love during his adventures there in World War II. So he returns to start up a business in Sarkhan and puts up the small amount of capital required himself. It should be noted that this is private enterprise in action, not a big government-funded project, and it will rely on local free market forces to prosper.

Colvin again shows what he is made of after Deong gets the better of him, and the mob of women beat him. Ambassador Sears only manages to send Colvin home over his vigorous objections (Colvin says, with great intensity, □I won't go□). But Gilbert MacWhite sends for him again, and this time Colvin's persistence pays off. Within a year or so, his project is a success, and the local economy benefits from his innovation. Thus Colvin demonstrates qualities that the authors believe represent core American values: initiative, self-reliance, business acumen, determination, perseverance, and personal and civic responsibility.

The preeminent example of the ideal American character in action is Homer Atkins. Although he is the □ugly American□ of the title, his rough outward appearance does not reflect the inner core of the man. As a blunt-spoken inventor and engineer, Atkins has no patience with intellectual theories or with men who dress in nice suits, wear after-shave lotion, and sit around conference tables. Atkins travels to Vietnam and then, at MacWhite's request, to Sarkhan, as a private individual. He certainly does not need the money, since he has been highly successful in his career and is worth $3 million (a huge fortune in 1958 dollars). He enjoys the challenge of new projects, but he is only interested in things that will be immediately useful for the local people. He is a realist and has no time for grandiose dreams. When it comes to setting up his business in Sarkhan, he presents a textbook example of how foreign aid programs should be conducted. He provides the expertise and the creative mind (in consultation with the local man, Jeepo), but all the materials he uses for the water pump he invents are local: pipes made from bamboo, pistons adapted from the pistons of old jeeps, and power from the drive mechanism of bicycles. Everything is cheap and easily available, and nothing has to be imported. Atkins then employs local labor, and they all work eighteen to twenty-hour days to get the business off the ground. Then those who make the product get the chance to sell it and make money. It is an ideal set-up all round, and its success is due to the sturdy good sense, ingenuity, hard work, and benevolence of Atkins.

Homer's wife Emma is another example of this sturdy American character. She is happy to live in a simple cottage in Sarkhan with relatively primitive facilities: □pressed earth floors, one spigot of cold water, a charcoal fire, two very comfortable hammocks, a horde of small, harmless insects.□ She does not for a moment miss the amenities of a modern American kitchen or the luxuries that are available in an advanced civilization. Indeed, in their simple, self-reliant way of living, Homer and Emma Atkins resemble not so much a modern American couple but a throwback to earlier times, the nineteenth century or even the colonial period. As John Hellmann points out in his book *American*

Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam, the Americans who have the right approach in *The Ugly American* represent ideas about the American character and about the nation's role in the world that go back to colonial times. One of these myths is of the frontier hero, with the frontier displaced in the novel from the American West onto the landscape of Southeast Asia.

Seen in this light, *The Ugly American* is not only an indictment of the ineffectiveness of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, it is also a wake-up call to Americans to rediscover their own best qualities and values. The authors return to this theme in their □Factual Epilogue,□ in which they write:

We have so lost sight of our own past that we are trying to sell guns and money alone, instead of remembering that is was the quest for the dignity of freedom that was responsible for our way of life.

The authors' conclusion, in which they write, □All over Asia we have found that the basic American ethic is revered and honored and imitated when possible,□ sends a very clear message. As long as Americans remain true to themselves and their values, they have nothing to fear from communist aggression; they will surely prevail.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *The Ugly American*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Quotes

"The men calling themselves Communists say that the soul and the State are identical. The price of being a Communist is that you must give them your soul and your will." Chapter 3, p. 46.

"First, stop talking about Russian tractors and promising we will send some here. We can't do it. We've got all we can do to supply military hardware to Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Second, bear down on the owners of property. Don't talk about 'social ownership of lands.' That only scares the peasants. Peasants are backward types. They want private property, not collective farms. Later they'll see the necessity for common ownership, but not now." Chapter 3, p. 55.

"How many people do you think we could round up in this country who can speak Cambodian or Japanese or even German? Well, not very many. I don't parlez vous very well myself, but I've always made out pretty well in foreign countries. Fact is, we don't expect you to know the native language. Translators are a dime a dozen overseas. And besides, it's better to make the Asians learn English." Chapter 6, p. 70.

"MacWhite knew that all of his careful work, his spending of millions of dollars, his cunning strategy, were all wasted. He knew that he, the Honorable Gilbert MacWhite, had made a terrible mistake. Somewhere in his carefully trained mind, in his rigorous background, in his missionary zeal, there was a flaw. It hit him very hard. Beneath the humility he had always, consciously, kept on the surface, and which he had always believed in, not only as a requirement of the social human, not only as a prerequisite of the receptive mind, but also as a reality of himself—beneath that humility there had been a rigid core of ego which had permitted him to place a fatal amount of faith in his own, unsupported judgment." Chapter 9, p. 89.

"Since December of 1956 the French have been fighting a war which has been maneuvered by the Communists precisely along the lines which Mao outlined in this pamphlet. You are a military man—you will please excuse my bluntness—but you made every mistake Mao wanted you to. You ignored his every lesson for fighting on this type of terrain. You neglected to get the political and economic cooperation of the Vietnamese, even though Mao proved long ago that Asians will not fight otherwise." Chapter 12, p. 117.

"U Maung Swe said, 'Poor America. It took the British a hundred years to lose their prestige in Asia. America has managed to lose hers in ten years.'" Chapter 13, p. 122.

"'Now, listen, goddamn it,' he [Tom Knox] roared. 'You people have been sitting on your asses here in Phnom Penh and you never get out to see a real person. I'm telling you right now that if we could increase the egg production of this country two hundred per cent we would do as much to help the average Cambodian as we would by building that damn expensive highway or that canal.'" Chapter 14, p. 137.

"When I was asked to read palms at the Philippine Ambassador's dinner, it was a God-given opportunity. All of the Sarkhanese brass except the King were present. And then that knucklehead of an assistant of yours, instead of helping me, started laughing at me and trying to make a fool out of me. If he had an ounce of brains, he would have noticed how serious the Sarkhanese were. And if those fools in the State Department had briefed him properly, he would have known all about palmistry and astrology before he even came here." Chapter 15, p. 134.

"And don't kid yourself, gentlemen; unless you feel they're equals and act on that feeling, they'll never respond. I've seen it happen too many times. Make someone feel inferior in a negotiating situation, and he'll be the toughest guy around the table. Gentlemen, that is where I stand, and that is the way I will run my delegation." Chapter 16, p. 167.

"Emma said softly, 'You've got a good machine there. I'm proud of you. But don't think that just because it's good the Sarkhanese are going to start using it right away. Remember that awful time you had getting trade unions in America to accept earth-moving equipment. These people are no different. You have to let them use the machine themselves and in their own way. If you try to ram it down their throats, they'll never use it.'" Chapter 18, p. 184.

"For many centuries, longer than any can remember, we have always had old people with bent backs in this village. And in every village that we know of the old people have always had bent backs. We had always thought this was a part of growing old, and it was one of the reasons that we dreaded old age. But, wife of the engineer, you have changed all that. By the lucky accident of your long-handled broom you showed us a new way to sweep. It is a small thing, but it has changed the lives of our old people." Chapter 19, p. 201.

"Dr. Barre, this is the first time you have ever suffered through the visit of a politician, and you're going to find it a trying time. Politicians aren't interested in the reality of things; they're only interested in getting votes and occasionally making some Boy Scout points for themselves by proposing a big cut in our foreign aid budget." Chapter 20, p. 208.

"If we cannot get Americans overseas who are trained, self-sacrificing, and dedicated, then we will continue losing in Asia. The Russians will win without firing a shot, and the only choice open to us will be to become the aggressor with thermonuclear weapons." Chapter 21, p. 227.

Adaptations

The Ugly American was made into a film in 1962, produced and directed by George Englund and starring Marlon Brando as Ambassador Gilbert MacWhite. For his work on the film, Englund was nominated for a Golden Globe award.

Topics for Further Study

What was the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, and how did it lead to the Vietnam War? What are the lessons to be derived from the Vietnam War? In what ways does the early 2000s conflict in Iraq resemble the Vietnam War and in what ways does it not? Give a classroom presentation in which you compare and contrast the Vietnam War and the conflict in Iraq.

As of 2005, what is the U.S. mission in the world, given that the cold war is over? Does the United States have a right to expect other countries to adopt democracy? Is democracy always the best form of government? Explain your position with examples.

In terms of an enemy that threatens the United States, what is the difference between international terrorism by a group such as Al Qaeda and Soviet communism? How does the fight against terrorism resemble the fight against communism, and how does it differ? What is the best way to defeat international terrorism?

Research the cold war and discuss the various reasons that have been advanced to explain the fact that the United States won and the Soviet Union lost. What were the roles played by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev? Write a compare and contrast paper on Reagan and Gorbachev.

Select any international problem and write a short story, in the style of *The Ugly American*, illustrating two different ways, one foolish and counter-productive and the other wise and effective, in which the problem might be approached or solved. The problem can be anything from global warming to nuclear proliferation or the AIDS epidemic.

Compare and Contrast

1950s: In 1957, the Russians launch Sputnik 1, the first space satellite, thus inaugurating the space age. This event prompts fears in the United States that the Soviet Union may be leading in military technology and may be able to launch ballistic missiles from Europe that could reach the United States. The Sputnik launch leads directly to the creation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958. The following decade is dominated by the so-called space race between the two superpowers.

Today: In 2004, President George W. Bush announces a new vision for the nation's space exploration program. The president commits the United States to a long-term human and robotic program to explore the solar system, starting with a return to the Moon that will ultimately enable future exploration of Mars and other destinations. The return to the Moon is planned for as early as 2015 and no later than 2020.

1950s: The cold war between the United States and the communist Soviet Union dominates global politics. Fear of communist conspiracies in the United States leads to the McCarthy era, named for the role played by Senator Joe McCarthy (R-Wis.). McCarthy uses unscrupulous and demagogic methods to expose alleged communists and their sympathizers, but his methods are so extreme that he is discredited. He is censured by the Senate in 1954.

Today: The cold war is over, and communism survives in only a few states in the world (Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea). Instead of communism, the greatest perceived danger to the United States and the West is international terrorism. Just as during the cold war, politicians did not want to be perceived by voters as being □soft on communism,□ so today, politicians like to win votes by presenting themselves as tough on terrorism and their opponents as weak.

1950s: The United States begins its involvement in Vietnam by sending military aid to the French in their struggle with the communists. After the French defeat, U.S. efforts in the region focus on establishing a stable noncommunist government in South Vietnam that will be friendly to U.S. interests.

Today: The Vietnam War, which ended in U.S. defeat, still casts a shadow over the national psyche and national politics. In the presidential election of 2004, Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry relies heavily on his experience as a decorated Vietnam War veteran, while his record in Vietnam is challenged in television advertisements by a conservative group of Vietnam veterans.

What Do I Read Next?

In *Sarkhan* (1965; published as *The Deceptive American* in 1977) Burdick and Lederer return to the fictional landscape of *The Ugly American*. The novel is about the attempts of two Americans, one a businessman and the other a professor, to prevent a communist takeover of the country. As in *The Ugly American*, the authors are critical of the U.S. government, and the characterization exhibits the same black and white quality of the earlier novel. But unlike *The Ugly American*, *Sarkhan* is a suspense novel that builds to a thrilling climax.

The Quiet American (1955), by British novelist Graham Greene, takes place in Saigon, Vietnam, during the later stages of the French war in Indochina in the 1950s. The □quiet American□ is Alden Pyle, who works for an American aid mission in Saigon but is also involved through the Central Intelligence Agency with espionage and terrorism. The novel offers insight into the early U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Greene's apparent anti-American stance meant that the novel was not initially popular in the United States, but Greene's warnings about American policies proved prescient.

Dennis Bloodworth's *An Eye for the Dragon: Southeast Asia Observed, 1954-1970* (1970) is a lively journalistic account of Southeast Asia by a veteran Far Eastern correspondent. Bloodworth's purpose is to describe historical and contemporary events in a way that reveals the beliefs, customs, prejudices, and patterns of thought in the people of Southeast Asia. He also describes the love-hate relationship between these countries and the West.

Eric F. Goldman's *The Crucial Decade and After: America, 1945-1960* (1960) is a classic account of the United States at home and abroad in the years following the end of World War II. Goldman shows how, after much debate and disagreement, the United States continued on the economic and social revolution it had embarked on in the previous two decades. This continuation was achieved by extensions of the welfare state (a system in which government strives to create economic and social benefits for all its citizens) and other policies. Goldman also shows how the United States continued the policies mapped out in the immediate postwar years for containment of the Soviet Union and co-existence with it.

Further Study

Allen, Richard, *A Short Introduction to the History and Politics of Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1970.

This concise survey of Southeast Asia is very useful for understanding the political situation in that region in the 1950s. Especially interesting is Allen's discussion of the French involvement in Indochina and their defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which sheds light on the episodes involving Major Monet and Major Wolchek in *The Ugly American*.

Christie, Clive, *The Quiet American and The Ugly American : Western Literary Perspectives on Indo-China in a Decade of Transition, 1950-1960*, University of Kent at Canterbury, Centre of South-East Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 10, 1989.

Christie discusses Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, *The Ugly American*, the memoirs of Dr. Thomas Dooley, a U.S. Navy doctor who worked in Vietnam and Laos in the 1950s, and French literature about the war in Indochina. Christie analyzes these works in the context of the struggle with communism in Southeast Asia and prevailing Western political attitudes toward Asia.

Kuhn, Delia W., □Bagging Asia,□ in *Saturday Review*, October 4, 1958, pp. 32-33.

In this review of *The Ugly American*, Kuhn, like some other reviewers, criticized what she regarded as shallow characterization. But she also expressed respect for the authors' direct experience of their subject while remaining skeptical of any belief that somehow the United States could save Asia.

Steel, Ronald, *Pax Americana: The Cold War Empire and the Politics of Counterrevolution*, revised edition, Penguin, 1970.

In this widely read book, first published in 1967, Steel discusses the idea of a □Pax Americana□ (Latin for □American peace□), which for him was based on a benevolent imperialism with a noble purpose. Steel's chapter on U.S. foreign aid and how it serves the purposes of imperialism has great relevance for *The Ugly American*. In the revised edition, published when the United States was heading for defeat in Vietnam, Steel modified his views, arguing that it was not so easy to claim that U.S. foreign policy was designed to promote liberty.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) 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, NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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

NfS 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 Novels 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 NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS 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 Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels 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 NfS 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." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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