The Underground Gardens Study Guide

The Underground Gardens by T. Coraghessan Boyle

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

T. Coraghessan Boyle's story, "The Underground Gardens," was first published in the *New Yorker* in the May 25, 1998, issue, and was collected in 2001 in the author's short-story collection *After the Plague.* The story is loosely based on the life of an Italian American immigrant who began digging a huge underground complex on his land in Fresno, California, in the aridSan Joaquin Valley, in the early 1900s. Using this historical person and elements of his life as a start, Boyle crafts an optimistic story about an Italian American immigrant whose hopes□ including marrying the woman of his dreams□are repeatedly dashed, but who nevertheless perseveres and continues to dream. This story is unlike many of Boyle's works, which poke fun at the human condition or contain large doses of cynicism, sarcasm or other forms of negativity. Instead, Boyle examines positive ideas such as the power of faith and the importance of self-sufficiency. The story is, however, similar to many of Boyle's other works, in that it uses an actual historical event□in this case, Baldasare's digging of his gardens□as a starting point for the narrative. A copy of the story can be found in the Penguin paperback edition of *After the Plague,* which was published in 2003.

Author Biography

Boyle was born on December 2, 1948, inPeekskill, New York. He has noted that he never read a book until he was eighteen. In fact, Boyle never aspired to be a writer. In the 1960s, Boyle enrolled at the State University of New York atPotsdam as a music student. While in school, he took an influential creative writing course, and began reading literature. After graduating in 1968, Boyle taught English in a public high school, which, he has admitted, was mainly to avoid serving in the Vietnam War.

During this same period, Boyle began writing his own short stories and became a habitual user of drugs and alcohol. These two activities culminated in Boyle's short story, "The OD and Hepatitis Railroad or Bust," which was published in the *North American Review.* In 1972, looking to clean up his act□and confident in his abilities as a writer after his story publication□Boyle applied and was accepted to the University of Iowa's prestigious Iowa Writers' Workshop, where he studied under some very influential writers, including John Irving. He earned two degrees from the university, a master of fine arts degree in 1974 and a doctoral degree in 1977.

After graduation, Boyle moved west to teach creative writing at theUniversity of Southern California, a tenured position that he continued to hold as of 2004. In 1979, he published *The Descent of Man,* a collection of short stories that he had used as his doctoral dissertation. Critics liked the book, which immediately earned Boyle a reputation as a quirky, humorous writer. Boyle cemented this reputation with his first novel, *Water Music* (1981). Over the next two decades, Boyle published seven novels and five more story collections, including 2001 's *After the Plague.* This last collection included "The Underground Gardens," which won Boyle an O. Henry Award.

Boyle published the novel*Drop City* in 2003.

Plot Summary

"The Underground Gardens" begins with a short biography of Baldasare Forestiere, a thirty-two-year-old Italian American immigrant who has survived by his digging skills, which he learned in his father's Italian orchards and which he honed through working as a laborer in American cities. It is the summer of 1905, and Baldasare has purchased seventy acres of central California land through the mail. He is optimistic about this real estate investment. Having heard about the lack of cold weather in California, he assumes that the land will be suited for growing his own vineyards.

Baldasare finds that, while the land never freezes, it is dry and nearly impenetrable, but this does not discourage him. First, he buys the necessary materials and builds himself a small shanty. Then, he uses his agricultural knowledge to find water and dig a well. He plants some seeds, but the hard California land is not fertile enough to produce much. He starts working for another farmer to replenish his savings, and just as he is getting depressed that he will never achieve his dream, he meets Ariadne Siagris, the young niece of a Greek drugstore owner, and falls instantly in love.

Baldasare finds new inspiration, which motivates him to work toward a new dream□marriage to Ariadne. Rain leaks into his flimsy shanty that night, so he digs a cavern the next day, thinking that it will someday be the cellar for the house in which he and Ariadne will live. Yet, as the rain returns, Baldasare moves all of his possessions into the cellar, and begins to fashion an underground house, including a stove and storage shelves. Since there is little laboring work that winter, Baldasare continues adding to his underground residence, digging out hallways and rooms.

His one indulgence is his weekly hamburger at Siagris' Drugstore, where he strikes up an acquaintance with Ariadne. Baldasare observes that Ariadne is not very smart at some tasks, is rapidly putting on weight, and has whiskers on her chin and red blotches on her skin, among other imperfections□ but these traits only make Baldasare love her more. For two years, Baldasare continues the pattern of working for other men to make money, digging out his underground house in his free time, and making his weekly visit to see Ariadne. She begins to show interest in Baldasare, especially when he tells her about his spacious twelve-room home. Baldasare finally works up the nerve to ask Ariadne to come see his home, and she accepts.

When he walks to town to pick her up, however, Ariadne is shocked that Baldasare has not come in a carriage, especially since it is particularly hot that day, and she refuses to go with him. The following week, Baldasare rents a cabriolet, and they travel to his underground residence, but Ariadne has been expecting a normal, aboveground house, and refuses to go underground with him. She is furious with Baldasare, and, three days later, Baldasare hears that Ariadne has gotten engaged to another man. Baldasare refuses to give up, however, believing that if he can demonstrate the strength of his love to Ariadne, she will come and see his underground palace and will be interested in him again. In an attempt to get her attention, Baldasare sneaks to the lot behind the drugstore one night and begins digging a heart-shaped hole in the ground underneath

Ariadne's window. Although Mr. Siagris and the sheriff try to stop Baldasare, he continues digging until the next evening, when Ariadne's new fiancé and one of his friends beat Baldasare badly.

A week after being released from the hospital, Baldasare gets a new inspiration, which comes to him in a flash. He dreams of *Baldasare Forestiere's Underground Gardens,* a unique set of complex caverns that he envisions spanning the entire area of his seventy-acre plot of land, and which will include fish ponds, a restaurant, a gift shop, and other aspects designed to attract tourists. Although he is still sore from his beating, he begins to dig, intent on achieving this latest dream.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

Baldasare is an Italian immigrant who has just arrived in Fresno, California. At age thirty-two, he has traveled from the east coast to California in hopes of transforming the 70-acre parcel of land, that he had purchased, into a thriving vineyard. The advertisement, from which he learned of the land that he ultimately purchased, promised fertile land with year-round sunshine, free from the dangers of frost.

Baldasare's lone talent is that he is able to dig. As a boy in Italy, he worked alongside his brothers in their father's orchard. When he arrived in America, he dug tunnels in New York City and Boston. To Baldasare, digging is an honorable – even holy – task, and it is what sustains him.

Baldasare arrives in Fresno in the summer of 1905 with only his shovel, pick, some clothes and a meager supply of provisions. He stops to ask a local farmer for directions, learning that his parcel of land is in an area inhabited by other Italians. After hiking more than three miles, he finds his land and discovers that the unforgiving California sun has relentlessly baked the ground, giving it the consistency of adobe. That night, he eats canned sardines for dinner before falling into a deep sleep.

Baldasare is a man of great dreams and big plans. When it became clear to him that his older brothers would be the heirs of their father's orchard, he decided to come to America to follow his dream of owning a thriving vineyard. In addition to the vineyard, Baldasare's dream includes a four-room house, a wife and seven children – three girls and four boys.

The next morning, he walks into town to buy a wheelbarrow, which he then fills with provisions. He works all day long; making four trips into town to get the supplies he needs to begin making his dream a reality. By the end of the week, he had constructed his first home – a one room shack scarcely big enough to fit his bed. As he looks at his new home, he is reminded of one of his father's teachings: one of the things that separate men from animals is the fact that men lie in houses while animals live in underground holes.

The following week, he begins to dig a well. Baldasare wants the well to be close to where his permanent home will one day stand, and so he spends a great deal of time trying to identify the best place to begin digging. Two feet below the earth's surface, he hits hardpan. Rather than becoming discouraged, Baldasare works harder, while convincing himself that the hardpan cannot possible cover all of his seventy acres. Finally, a week later, he finally hits water thirty-two feet below the earth's surface. Buoyed by the fact that his hard work has finally reaped a reward, he begins to envision the irrigation system that one day will criss-cross his land.

After nearly three months, Baldasare's savings are depleted, and so, he goes to work for other farmers as a laborer. This, unfortunately, leaves him with little time to work on his own land. As a result, his vegetable garden is scarcely adequate to feed his self. He becomes increasingly despondent and begins to wonder if his dreams will ever be realized.

One afternoon, as he was having a hamburger and coffee at the town drugstore and contemplating all that has happened, Baldasare meets Ariadne Siagris, the niece of the drugstore's owner. Baldasare is immediately smitten by her beauty and wants to convey to her that he intends to be prosperous. However, he is overcome by shyness and he instead blurts out "Baldasare Forestiere, at your service," a declaration that amuses Ariadne.

Anxious to learn more about her, Baldasare makes some inquiries among the townspeople with whom he had become acquainted and learns that Ariadne had come from Chicago after her parents were killed in an accident. Now nineteen years old, Ariadne lives with her aunt and uncle in an apartment above the drugstore. That night as he lay awake in his bed, Baldasare resolves to find a way to make Ariadne his bride. Soon, his thoughts turn to the tunnels he had helped dig in New York City and Boston and how those tunnels helped shield people from the weather.

The next morning, Baldasare awakes with a newly found sense of purpose and begins digging again, this time to make a cellar for the home he would one day build. When he finishes, he begins to work on the walls, but he soon decides that the standard squared walls did not suit him. Therefore, he begins to shape the walls so that they resemble a dome. Because the ceiling is made of hardpan, it protects him from the sun as well as the rain. As a result, when the next rainstorm arrives, Baldasare decides to move his possessions into the cellar. Soon after, he breaks through the hardpan so that in order to a stovepipe outside, thus making the cellar his new home.

As he goes about the task of setting up his new home, Baldasare wonders what his father would think of him living in the ground. While he has great respect for his father's wisdom, Baldasare reasons that his father has no idea about the conditions under which he has been living. Baldasare finally reasons that his decision to move into the cellar was made out of practicality. Finally at peace, Baldasare picks up his shovel and begins to chip away at one of the cellar's walls. As he works, he envisions a hallway, a kitchen and a bedroom that opens onto an atrium laden with plants and flowers.

As the winter slowly marches on, Baldasare keeps digging. Once a week, he makes the trip to Siagris' Drugstore for his hamburger. He often spends several hours sitting at the counter, making small talk with Ariadne, leaving only when her uncle directs an impatient remark his way. As he sits watching Ariadne, Baldasare begins to notice some imperfections in her appearance and behavior. For example, she often appears to have trouble making change and she seems to have put on quite a bit of weight. Even so, Baldasare is firm in his resolve to marry her.

For the next two years, Baldasare busies himself laboring for others and digging. As he digs, he can easily imagine what each room will look like. He socializes little, preferring instead to focus his energy on completing his task. Each Saturday, however, he puts his shovel aside and goes to Siagris' Drugstore. Baldasare goes to buy a hamburger and to see Ariadne. He makes the trip each week, regardless of the weather and inwardly hopes that Ariadne looks forward to seeing him as much as he looks forward to going. As they get to know each other better, the conversation becomes more personal and Baldasare eventually tells her about his home, describing it as a ranch containing twelve rooms. Summoning his courage, he invites her to his ranch for a picnic.

That Sunday, when Baldasare arrives to pick up Ariadne, her uncle greets him. Baldasare knows that even though her uncle does not like him, he is hopeful that Baldasare will soon assume responsibility for her. It is a hot day, and as they walk toward Baldasare's property, Ariadne suddenly stops and asks where his carriage is. Baldasare explains that he does not own a carriage and tells her that he had planned to walk. Ariadne refuses to walk. Therefore, the following week, Baldasare spends some of his savings to hire a carriage.

Baldasare is not accustomed to handling horses, making the trip to and from town is somewhat difficult. When they finally reach his property, Ariadne impatiently asks where Baldasare's house is. When he points to the cellar, she accuses him of playing a trick on her and asks again where his house is. He tells her that he is not teasing her and that the cellar is indeed his twelve-room home.

As he tries to coax Ariadne from the carriage, he thinks of all he wants to tell her: that the house is cool and fresh smelling, that it cost him nothing to build it and that it will not fall apart after several years. Unfortunately, the words will not come and Ariadne will not budge from the carriage. Three days later, Baldasare learns that Ariadne is engaged to marry Hiram Broadbent, a local merchant.

As Baldasare contemplates this news over a meal with his friend Lucca Albanese, he reasons that Ariadne's engagement does not necessarily mean that she will marry. He asks Lucca if he knows Hiram Broadbent, learning that he although, he has plenty of money, is mean and often drunk. Lucca tries to convince Baldasare to forget about Ariadne, but he will not be persuaded. He decides that all of his efforts were for her and that he needs to make her aware of that. Unfortunately, however, Ariadne refuses to see him, and her uncle banishes him from the drugstore.

After several days of wondering what to do, Baldasare finally develops a plan. Setting out after dark one evening, he pushes his wheelbarrow and tools to the vacant lot behind the drugstore and begins digging. His plan is to dig an image of a heart into the ground to convey the depth of his love for Ariadne. By morning, the heart's outline is clearly visible to Siagris who is watching from his apartment. When Siagris asks Baldasare what he is doing, Baldasare replies simply that he is digging.

Hoping to avoid a confrontation, Baldasare tells Siagris that his efforts are for Ariadne and asks him to summon her, a request that is threatening to arrest him. His goal is to

make the heart six feet deep and his every effort is toward achieving that goal. He does not know if Ariadne is watching or if she is even aware of what he is doing.

It is after midnight when two men approach Baldasare. One of the men speaks – Hiram Broadbent - and tells Baldasare that he is embarrassing his fiancé. Despite the fact that he is strong from years of hard work, Baldasare is no match for the men.It does not take long for them to overpower him.

Baldasare is finally released from the hospital and returns to his home. No longer obsessed with thoughts of Ariadne, he sits one evening looking around his home. His mind is filled with visions of fishponds, gardens and rooms that traverse his entire seventy-acre parcel of land like a maze. He sees gift shops and restaurants, parking lots and grottos. Before long, his vision of what he is to accomplish becomes clear; he will build *Baldasare Forestiere's Underground Gardens*. Despite his arm being in a sling and his heavily wrapped broken ribs, Baldasare picks up his shovel and slowly begins to dig.

Analysis

"The Underground Gardens" is a story based on the real-life events that took place in the life of Baldasare Forestiere, an Italian immigrant. The central themes in this story are overcoming obstacles, broken dreams and hopes for the future.

As we get to know Baldasare better, we see that his entire life has been a series of disappointments. He comes to understand at a very early age that, despite his strong work ethic and his great love of the land, he will never inherit his father's orchards. This fact stems not from the fact that his father dislikes him in any way, but rather from the fact that he is the third-born son – a circumstance he is powerless to change. While this obstacle may have proven to be insurmountable to many, Baldasare used it as a vehicle to empower his dreams of finding success and prosperity in America.

As an immigrant, Baldasare faces many additional obstacles. The fact that he has been mislead about the land he purchased becomes obvious to the reader almost immediately. Recall that as he asks for directions to the parcel, the farmer he encounters comments that the area where the land is located is where all the Italians are. Additionally, his limited grasp of English makes it difficult for him to communicate and so he spends a great deal of time alone.

Another obstacle appears when Baldasare comes to realize that the land on which he has pinned all of his hope for the future is not suitable for farming. Again, this is not something he is able to change. Rather than dwelling on all that is wrong with his predicament, Baldasare decides to focus his energies on creating his underground world and winning the affections of Ariadne.

Even his growing realization that Ariadne has some physical and mental flaws, is a disappointment in that it represents yet another facet of Baldasare's life that has not gone the way he had anticipated. It is also symbolic of things not being as they originally

appear. Recall that Baldasare was lured to Fresno by an advertisement that boasted of the region's ideal climate and fertile land; however, it was only after his garden failed to yield a decent harvest that he accepted the fact that he had been misled. Similarly, he was immediately smitten when he first met Ariadne, however, as he got to know her better, he began to realize that she had many flaws.

However, just as Baldasare refused to give up on the land that had promised him so much only to disappoint him, he refuses to give up on Ariadne, choosing instead to do whatever it takes to convince her to be his wife.

As the story continues to unfold, we begin to realize that Baldasare's pursuit of Ariadne is not easy. Indeed, it takes more than two years before he can summon the courage to ask her on a date. He knows that Ariadne's uncle is not pleased with their relationship, which makes him uncomfortable. Then, he is forced to spend his hard-earned money to rent a carriage so that she will come to see his house. In addition, after all of this, she rejects his sincerity by refusing to look at his home. Again, we are confronted with the notion of things not always being as they appear; only this time, it is from Ariadne's perspective. As Ariadne sits in the carriage looking at Baldasare's underground home, she can only say, "You said…twelve rooms." From her perspective, Baldasare had presented himself as a prosperous rancher who would be able to provide for her. The fact that his house was underground and not a traditional structure caused her to reject him. Meanwhile, Baldasare is trying her to see beyond the fact that the house is actually constructed underground. Remember, as Baldasare tries to convince her to come down from the carriage to see his home he is thinking to himself that "if she would come, if only she would see" she might think differently about his home. Ariadne's refusal to come down from the carriage to see the house illustrates the consequences of not being able to see beyond the perceived obstacles.

It is also interesting to note that Baldasare meets Ariadne at one of his lowest points: the period immediately after his realization that the land he worked so hard to buy will never be transformed into the vineyard that he had dreamt about for so many years. Therefore, at the point when he first meets her, it is not surprising that he manages to overlook her less appealing physical attributes. This is likely because at this point, his sense of self-worth is relatively low. As he once again begins to get satisfaction with his work and restores confidence in himself, he begins to see things in Ariadne that he had not allowed himself to see before, including her weight, her eye and her blotchy skin. Even so, he is not deterred in his pursuit of her, which suggests that perhaps he is settling for Ariadne because he sees her as his only hope in fulfilling his dream of having a wife and family.

It is also significant that Baldasare choose a depth of six feet for his final message to Ariadne in that graves are usually dug to a depth of six feet below the earth's surface. It is likely that this depth was chosen to represent Baldasare's state of mind at that particular time as well as his sincere belief that his life would have no worth if Ariadne rejected him again. The heart then, in addition to being a symbol of his love for Ariadne, also takes on a completely different meaning and becomes a symbol of lost hope.

Baldasare's decision to transform his home into an underground garden represents his acceptance of his fate. As he finally comes to understand that his dream of a prosperous vineyard and a wife and family has ended, he decides to move forward with the rest of his life and embark on a new dream.

Characters

Lucca Albanese

Lucca Albanese is another Italian American immigrant, and Baldasare's only friend in California. They meet while working in another man's vineyards.

Hiram Broadbent

Hiram Broadbent gets engaged to Ariadne Siagris after she rebukes Baldasare. When Baldasare tries to get Ariadne's attention by digging a heart-shaped hole under her window, Broadbent and his amateur boxing friend beat Baldasare so badly that he ends up in the hospital.

Baldasare Forestiere

Baldasare Forestiere is an optimistic young Italian American, based on an actual historical figure, who buys a seventy-acre plot of worthless central California land with the intention of growing grapevines. As the youngest of three Italian sons, he will probably not inherit his father's vineyards, and so he has left the comfort of Italy behind to make his own fortune inAmerica. Although his dream of growing vineyards on his new land ultimately fails, Baldasare proves to be very resilient. His second dream is to marry Ariadne Siagris, the niece of old Siagris, a Greek drugstore owner. Baldasare pours his seemingly limitless energy into building a life with Ariadne.

Baldasare digs a cellar, thinking it will become part of the house he will build for himself and Ariadne, but then decides that an underground residence will be more sturdy and impressive. Over the span of a few years, he builds up a relationship with Ariadne, and tells her about his large house. When she finally agrees to see it, however, she does not share his enthusiasm for underground living and, in fact, thinks that Baldasare has duped her. When he hears that Ariadne has gotten engaged to somebody else, Baldasare does not give up, and tries to impress her by digging a heart-shaped hole underneath her window. This act prompts Ariadne's new fiancé, Hiram Broadbent, along with one of his friends, to beat up Baldasare. When Baldasare is released from the hospital, he gets the inspiration for his third and final dream□digging a massive set of underground gardens that will attract tourists and make him rich.*Euphrates Mead*

Euphrates Mead, who never appears in the story except in letters, is the man who sells Baldasare his seventy-acre plot of California land.

Ariadne Siagris

Ariadne Siagris is a nineteen-year-old Greek woman, who comes to live with her uncle in California after her parents are killed at a railroad crossing. (In Greek mythology, Ariadne was the daughter of King Minos ofCrete, the ruler who sacrificed Athenian youths to a monster known as the minotaur a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a human. Ariadne helped one of the intended sacrificial victims, the Athenian hero Theseus, to escape from the labyrinth where the minotaur lived by giving the hero a ball of thread.) While living with her uncle, Ariadne works at his drugstore. Despite her education, she is not very good at reading menus or making change, and she begins to put on lots of weight from eating too much at the drugstore. She also develops red splotches on her skin, along with other imperfections. Through Baldasare's regular weekly visits to the drugstore, Ariadne learns that he has a big house and that he is interested in her. She agrees to see his house, but is mortified when she finds out it is underground. She rebukes Baldasare, refuses to see him, and promptly gets engaged to Hiram Broadbent.

Old Siagris

Old Siagris is Ariadne's Greek uncle, who takes in the young woman when her parents are killed. He is tolerant of Baldasare when he thinks that Baldasare might be able to marry and support Ariadne and thus remove the financial burden from his own shoulders. But when Siagris learns that Baldasare's big house is underground, he bans Baldasare from his drugstore, and tells him he cannot see Ariadne anymore.

Themes

Faith

While "The Underground Gardens" explores many ideas, the common thread that runs through the story is faith namely, Baldasare's near-unshakeable faith in his ability to achieve his dreams. "He'd always thought big, even when he was a boy wandering his father's orchards." Recognizing early on that his place in the family assured he would never inherit these orchards, "Baldasare wasn't discouraged he knew he was destined for greatness." Baldasare initially thinks this greatness will come in a familiar form, as the owner of his own vineyards inAmerica.

The power of his faith is such that Baldasare is not daunted by the tasks necessary to create vineyards in the hard, dry California land. He gets right to work. "He didn't even stop to eat, that first day." Baldasare pursues this first dream with a single-minded passion, fighting the natural toughness of the land with only his pick and shovel. When it becomes clear to him that his land is not suited for vineyards, his dream changes to marrying Ariadne, but the strength of his faith remains the same. "She was the one. She was what he'd come toAmerica for, and he spoke her name aloud . . . and made the solemnest pledge that she would one day be his bride." After Ariadne refuses Baldasare, his aspirations change again, this time to digging a seventy-acre underground tourist attraction. Yet Baldasare's faith remains strong. In fact, the originality of his latest vision affects him more deeply than either of his previous two dreams. "It was a complete vision, more eloquent than any set of blueprints or elevations, and it staggered him."

While Baldasare is able to maintain his faith, even when he is chasing unconventional or lofty dreams, others are not capable of taking this leap of faith. When Ariadne comes to see Baldasare's "twelve room" house, she does not see it above-ground and thinks that Baldasare is playing a prank on her and that his house is hidden behind a hill. Baldasare becomes insistent, trying to "lead her down from the carriage if only she would come, if only she would see," but Ariadne, like the rest of the town, does not have Baldasare's ability to think outside the box and find the beauty in unconventional things. Even Baldasare's friend,Lucca, lacks this vision.Lucca, unlike Ariadne, does come visit Baldasare in his underground residence, but he never thinks of it the way that B aldasare does and, in fact, refers to Baldasare's home in a derogatory fashion. When Baldasare asks Lucca about Ariadne's new fiancé,Lucca says, "Hell, if you ever came out of your hole, you'd know who I'm talking about."

Self-Sufficiency

While his faith is strong, Baldasare would not even have a chance to achieve any of his dreams if it wasn't for his self-sufficiency. From an early age, he worked in his father's vineyards, where he learned a variety of digging and agricultural skills, which he hones through his laboring work in American cities. These skills come in handy on Baldasare's California land, where he is able to build a shanty, find an underground water source to

supply his well, and ultimately form his underground residence, all without the help of others. Furthermore, he is able to do these things while working long hours in the worst conditions.

This same constancy and discipline also helps Baldasare manage his financial matters. Although the story never discusses this, in order to even come toAmerica, much less buy land, Baldasare would have had to save a fair amount of money. In fact, he is always conscious of his savings, recognizing that the key to survival is to never put himself in a bad financial spot, even if it means putting his dreams on hold, as he has to do three months after arriving on his land. So "when his savings began to dwindle down to nothing, Baldasare became a laboring man all over again." Baldasare has so programmed himself into a self-sufficient mode of financial survival that he is unable to enjoy entertainment as others do. When he and his friendLucca go to the vaudeville theater, Baldasare is unable to focus on the show, because "all the while he was regretting the two cents the streetcar had cost him and the fifteen-cent admission." Baldasare prides himself on his frugal spending, but proves that he can also go against his nature if it means taking another step toward achieving his dream. For example, when Ariadne refuses to go see Baldasare's house unless he takes her there in a carriage, he obliges. "The following Sunday, though it wounded him to throw his money away like somePark Avenue millionaire, he pulled up to Siagris' Drugstore in a hired cabriolet."

Appearances

To Baldasare, hiring the cabriolet makes it seem like he is trying to appear like a millionaire. Baldasare is a man obsessed with appearances. Baldasare's initial dream is to create vineyards on his American land, not only because he was raised in the business inItaly, but because it fits into his vision of what the American dream should look like. In his mind's eye, he sees "his seventy acres buried in grapes," a large "house of four rooms" for his wife and children, "four sons and three daughters" in other words, an excessive, unrestricted lifestyle. When he meets Ariadne, she replaces the vineyards as the central focus of his dream, but he is initially discouraged, because of his first, favorable impression of her appearance. "What could he offer her, a girl like that who'd come all the way from Chicago, Illinois, to live with her uncle, the prosperous Greek a school-educated girl used to fine things and books?" As Baldasare spends more time with Ariadne, he recognizes that, not only is she not as smart as he had thought, but that she also has a number of "imperfections" including a flawed eye and splotches on her skin. He does not mind them. In fact, he thinks they will be an asset to him, and becomes "surer each day that she was his. After all, who else would see in her what he saw? . . . Who but Baldasare Forestiere would come forward to declare himself?" Baldasare assumes that most suitors will only be interested in the physical appearance of their potential brides, and not look beyond imperfections such as mottled skin, as he is doing.

Even Baldasare's final vision the massive, underground complex of gardens is based on appearances. In his imagination, he sees, among other things, "a lot for parking the carriages and automobiles of the patrons who would flock there to see what he'd

accomplished in his time on earth." For Baldasare, the poor Italian American immigrant, it is not enough to just make money and provide for a family. To be truly successful, he feels that he must build something large and visible that will prove to the world, once and for all, that he "wasn't just another sorrowful Italian laborer with no more means or expectations than the price of the next hamburger sandwich, but a man of substance."

Style

Metaphor

A metaphor is a comparison between dissimilar things that invites readers to see the subject in a new way. In this story, digging is the literal activity of creating a hole by removing dirt. It is also a way of characterizing Baldasare and of revealing his belief system. Ultimately digging is a metaphor for Baldasare's success. "He dug because the earth was there beneath his feet, and men paid him to move it. He dug because it was a sacrament, because it was honorable and holy." Digging is not only his means of making money, it is also the only religion he knows. It is what gives him faith and is the means by which he plans to achieve each of his dreams the vineyard, impressing Ariadne so that she will marry him, and his underground gardens.

A metaphor becomes more powerful when the metaphorical meaning is the opposite of the standard meaning of the word or concept. Boyle's digging metaphor works in this way.

Normally, people speak of success with upward-focused terms. For example, business owners "build" their organizations and star employees "climb" the corporate ladder. Digging, on the other hand, a downward-focused activity, is associated with lower class laborers and with negative terms in general, as when somebody in a bad situation says they have "dug themselves into a hole." Likewise, criminals are often said to inhabit an "underworld."

The underground world is also, as Baldasare's father tells him as a boy, synonymous with the animal world. ' 'Men are upright. . . and they have dominion over the beasts. . . . And where do the beasts live, mio figlio? In the ground, no?" In fact, in the beginning of the story, the city digging work Baldasare has done is described in animal-like terms. "As a young man in Boston and New York he burrowed like a rodent beneath streets and rivers, scouring the walls of subway tubes and aqueducts."

Yet, as Baldasare is faced with the challenge of surviving the harsh California rains, he ignores these stereotypes of underground life, and puts his faith in digging once again. "It took him a while, but the conclusion Baldasare finally reached was that he was no animal□he was just practical, that was all." He starts building his underground residence, thinking that it will impress Ariadne. Unfortunately, while Baldasare sees digging as the way to achieve his dreams, nobody else is able to look past the negative connotations of digging and life underground.

Setting

The setting is also a crucial component of the story. The story is set in the developing American West in the early 1900s, when most of the good land had already been snatched up, and immigrants like Baldasare were left with scraps of infertile real estate. When Baldasare arrives at the train station and asks a farmer for directions to his land,

the man's comments indicate that he thinks the land is worthless. "That's where all theGuineas are," he said, "that's where Mead sold 'em. Seventy acres, isn't it? That's what I figured. Same as the rest." The farmer's use of the word "Guinea" underscores the racist attitudes that were aimed toward Italian Americans in this time period. Not many expected Italian American immigrants to succeed inAmerica, even if they had bought land. It was more likely that they would end up working for a more wealthy landowner, as Baldasare has to when his savings start to run out. "He plowed another man's fields, planted another man's trees, dug irrigation channels and set grape canes for one stranger after another." This depresses Baldasare. "He'd dreamed of independence. .. . and what had he gotten but wage slavery all over again?"

Historical Context

Immigration fromItaly in the late 1800s and early 1900s

In the story, Baldasare moves to California in 1905, after having emigrated to America fromItaly several years before. He was not alone. The last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth witnessedAmerica's biggest period of Italian immigration. The Italians had powerful reasons to leave their homeland. In 1870, following the conquest of Rome and the unification of Italy into one state, many Italians experienced a crushing poverty, brought on by political chaos, overpopulation, and an overabundance of agricultural products that caused a massive deflation in the market. Seeking a better life, many Italians emigrated to other countries. "By the end of the century more than 5.3 million Italians of all ages had emigrated, nearly half a million more than Italy's population growth up to that point," Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale note in their book *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience.*

Besides poverty, some Italians left home because their opportunities inItaly were limited. In the story, Baldasare realizes that he will never be successful inItaly, because he is not the eldest son. Mangione and Morreale note this trend: "It was the eldest who took charge of the family in the event of the father's death and who became the chief beneficiary of whatever properties the family had." Unfortunately, many Italians left a bad situation to come into a worse one. Many of the immigrants were illiterate, and were too trusting, making them ripe targets for hucksters that only wanted to steal their money by offering to find the immigrants a job or a place to live, and never delivering on either promise. Or, these charlatans worked as agents for employers who sought cheap labor. In some cases, the employer rigged it so that the immigrant owed money for lodgings or work supplies, and made sure that the immigrant's salary was never enough to cover these expenses, thus making the immigrant a type of indentured servant. Since many, like Baldasare in the story, did not read or write English, they had little recourse to defend themselves in situations such as these. Mangione and Morreale note: "In 1885, in an effort to protect foreign workers from unscrupulous hiring agents, Congress enacted the contract labor laws that made it illegal to recruit immigrants before they reached the United States."

Baldasare Forestiere

Boyle's story features a character named Baldasare Forestiere, who is modeled on an actual Italian American immigrant who came toFresno, California in the early 1900s. Forestiere's life is shrouded in mystery, and not all of the details are known, or agreed upon. For example, while Boyle's story has Forestiere coming to California in 1905, some sources say it was 1904, some put it as late as 1907, and others simply indicate that it was the early 1900s. Likewise, while the story is correct in saying that Forestiere bought the land inFresno and gave up on the idea of farming because the ground was

too hard and infertile, there is some disagreement on how many acres Forestiere actually bought. Some say seventy acres, as it is in Boyle's story, while others put the number as low as ten□the size of the modern-day Forestiere Underground Gardens, a tourist attraction run by Forestiere's heirs that is registered with the National Register of Historic Places. Most sources agree that Forestiere dug his gardens over a period of about four decades, but not everybody gives the same reason as to why he started in the first place. Some say that Forestiere, like Boyle's character, began the project to escape the weather. But Boyle's story deviates from most accounts, which say that it was extreme heat□not torrential rains□that caused Forestiere to seek underground shelter. According to one legend that has sprung up around the gardens, Forestiere began digging the gardens in an effort to win the love of a woman. This, in fact, may have helped spark Boyle's story and the character of Ariadne. Of course, the only thing that can be certain of is thatForestiere left a unique and massive structure as his legacy, which one can still visit as of 2004.

Critical Overview

Boyle is known for his short fiction. As Denis Hennessy notes in his 1999 entry on Boyle for *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* "Boyle has built his career as a short-story writer on stylistic innovations and inventive subject matter, always displaying his respect for the power of short fiction to entertain." Yet, for all of the critical acclaim he has received for his short stories, not many scholars have commented on "The Underground Gardens" or, for that matter, the collection in which it was included, *After the Plague.*

Those who have reviewed the book, however, have given it high marks. In his 2001 review of the book for *Library Journal,* David W. Henderson calls the stories "wickedly ironic, sometimes poignant, sometimes darkly humorous tales that speak directly to the human condition and to a variety of contemporary social issues."Henderson also notes that the book "is classic Boyle, a work to be embraced by his enthusiasts and one that belongs in most collections of serious fiction." At the same time, he says that "The Underground Gardens" is "Somewhat out of context, but no less touching" than the other stories.

Henderson has good reason to single out "The Underground Gardens," since it is the rare Boyle story that features a protagonist like Baldasare, an optimist who continues to try, even when his dreams fail. As Hennessy notes, Boyle's protagonists are usually deplorable:

There are no true heroes in Boyle's short fiction. The reader may ask as well if there are any real, memorable characters in his stories or if the cynicism of his stories has obliterated the humanity of the characters.

Still, while "The Underground Gardens" is different in moral tone than many of Boyle's other stories, its historical setting is one that the author has used again and again. As Jon Regardie notes in his 2000 *Los Angeles Magazine* review of Boyle's novel, *A Friend of the Earth,* Boyle practices a "blend of historical fiction and satire that has nabbed him a fistful of honors." Likewise, in his 1998 review of Boyle's novel *Riven Rock,* for *The Washington Times,* David Patterson noted that the author "loves the era in which this novel is placed. For a satirist the early twentieth century is ripe territory." Patterson also says that "The prejudices of that earlier age were also firmer and perhaps more obvious than our own," a fact that B oyle plays on to great effect in "The Underground Gardens."

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses Coraghessan's use of imagery in "TheUnderground Gardens. "

The specific details of the life of Baldasare Forestiere□the Italian American historical figure who spent four decades digging a unique underground complex inFresno, California, in the early 1900s□are open to debate. As depicted by Boyle's short story, "The Underground Gardens," Baldasare is a hardworking Italian immigrant who comes toAmerica to make his fortune. Imbued with a strong faith in his abilities and a self-sufficient nature, Boyle's Forestiere perseveres even as his initial dreams are crushed and he must find the strength to follow new ones. He is a noble man who has admirable, even heroic qualities. This goes against the assessment of critics such as Denis Hennessy, who notes in his *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry on B oyle, "The reader mayaskaswellif there are any real, memorable characters in his stories or if the cynicism of his stories has obliterated the humanity of the characters." When an author chooses to break his or her normal style, it is usually for good reason. By examining the effects of Boyle's use of imagery in "The Underground Gardens" one can begin to understand why the author deviates from his normal practice of writing cynical stories.

"TheUnderground Gardens" is an extremely visual story. From the very first paragraph, Boyle sets up the two types of imagery that he uses throughout the story which give the tale much of its power and help define Boyle's interpretation of Baldasare's life:

As a boy in Sicily he stood beside his brothers under the sun that was like a hammer and day after day stabbed his shovel into the skin of the ancient venerable earth of their father's orchards.

The sun in Sicily is so hot it is "like a hammer," setting up the story's strong environmental imagery. Likewise, Baldasare digs in the "skin" of his father's orchards, setting up the story's anatomical imagery. Environmental images are important to the plot of the story. Baldasare's labor background in Italy has prepared and conditioned him to work inFresno's extreme heat. In fact, he prefers it to the "sleet and snow" that he faced working inAmerica' s eastern cities. He refers to California's weather as "good Sicilian heat, heat that baked you right down to the grateful marrow of your happy Sicilian bones." His ability to survive in this weather separates this "sun-seared little man" from many others, including his intended beloved, Ariadne Siagris, and her family. When Baldasare comes to pick up Ariadne, the "Siagris children lay about like swatted flies," and it is "too hot to smile, so" Mrs. Siagris "grimaced instead." And unlike Baldasare, Ariadne does not see the value in saving money by walking on a hot day. When he comes to pick her up to take her to see his house, she is shocked that he does not have a carriage and that he is expecting them to walk. " 'Walk?" she echoed. "In this heat? You must be crazy."

Baldasare is not, however, immune to the effects of the heat. In fact, when he goes against his laboring nature and tries to be something he is not, by dressing up in fancy clothes to impress Ariadne, he is as hot and miserable as the rest of the populace. "He was wearing his best suit of clothes, washed just the evening before, and the unfamiliar jacket clung to him like dead skin." He is also not able to fully escape the cold that he faced in New York andBoston. During a particularly rainy night in his shack, the cold is almost unbearable. "He was wearing every stitch of clothing he possessed, wrapped in his blankets and huddled over the coal-oil lamp, and still he froze, even here in California."

These environmental factors, especially the cold, ultimately give Baldasare his initiative to start digging an underground home. During that cold, rainy night, he remembers his work in the tunnels in New York andBoston, "how clean they were, how warm in winter and cool in summer, how they smelled, always, of the richness of the earth." Baldasare, a very earthy man and raised to respect the soil, ultimately decides that living in the earth is a more natural choice for him than trying to live the above-ground, conventional life of everybody else.

Anatomical imagery also plays a large role in the story, especially as it relates to Baldasare's passion for Ariadne. Throughout the story, Boyle chooses images that contain undertones of sex or attraction. As a lifelong laborer, Baldasare has developed a toned body, so that when he lifts the handles of his new wheelbarrow, he feels "the familiar flex of the muscles of his lower back." Later, when Baldasare is trying to impress Ariadne and win back her love by digging the heart-shaped hole underneath her window, he wonders if she is watching, but "if she saw the lean muscles of his arms strain and his back flex, she gave no sign of it." Even Baldasare's digging takes on erotic qualities. For example, the day after he meets Ariadne, he begins digging the cellar that he expects will someday be a part of their house, and it is obvious that he is thinking about her in romantic terms while he is working. "The pick rose and fell, the shovel licked at the earth with all the probing intimacy of a tongue."

Images of Ariadne and her anatomy also play prominently in the story, in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. When Baldasare examines his newFresno land to try to find a water source, he observes "the way the hill of his shack and the one beside it abutted each other like the buttocks of a robust and fecund woman." This description foreshadows, or predicts, the introduction of Ariadne, who grows in physical size as Baldasare's love grows for her. "He watched with satisfaction as her hips and buttocks swelled so that even at nineteen she had to walk with a waddle." Given the modern American culture, which tends to emphasize thinness, Baldasare's attraction might seem strange to some readers. Yet, to Baldasare, Ariadne's weight is an asset. He remembers one of the women inItaly, Signora Cardino, "who was said to drink olive oil instead of wine and breakfast on sugared cream and cake." To Baldasare, Ariadne's stoutness is a positive sign of her social status. As a poor immigrant, Baldasare has always restricted himself□in eating, spending, and all other aspects of living. To him, success inAmerica means pursuing a robust, unrestricted life, the type of life that Ariadne currently leads. As the word "fecund" suggests in the above quote that describes Baldasare's land, Ariadne's girth also represents fertility. Baldasare's dream

includes a large family, "his four sons and three daughters sprinting like colts across the yard," and he envisions Ariadne as the mother of these children.

Baldasare has a conviction that no others in the story possess. His passion for Ariadne is so intense that he is unwilling to let it go for any reason, and Boyle underscores this passion through his use of imagery. Unfortunately, Baldasare assumes that Ariadne's feelings for him are equally as strong, failing to recognize that the other characters in the story, including Ariadne, are more superficial than he is. Just as Ariadne expects to be shuttled around in a carriage as opposed to walking, she also is not willing to sacrifice her conventional vision of an aboveground home and accept Baldasare's underground palace.

Yet, even though Baldasare's goals of growing grapevines and marrying Ariadne ultimately prove impossible, and he willingly remains an outsider, he ends the story happier than all of the other characters, who let circumstances dictate their futures. For example, when it is clear to Ariadne that Baldasare is not rich, she promptly marries the wealthy Hiram Broadbent. Though he has money, he is also "a drunk" and "mean as the devil," and one suspects that Ariadne's marriage will be less than rosy. Baldasare is the only character who is totally in control of his future. He focuses on digging his underground complex, an activity that is not subject to any environmental or human factors. He is driven by the strength of this final vision, which is almost religious in nature. "Standing there in the everlasting silence beneath the earth, he reached out a hand to the wall in front of him, his left hand, pronating the palm as if to bless some holy place." One expects that Boyle's character will spend decades carving out his underground palace and that he will be happy while he is doing it.

So why did Boyle, who is known for his cynical satires about humans with few redeeming qualities, choose to write a nice little story about a hardworking Italian American immigrant who perseveres and who, given the historical background of the real Baldasare Forestiere, will probably end up succeeding? The answer may come from Boyle's own life. Like Baldasare, Boyle is an outsider, who initially wanted to be accepted by society. In his early career, Boyle yearned to be included among the nation's popular authors, but as Hennessy notes, "he has never become a household name." Like Baldasare, Boyle denied the urge to conform, even if it meant achieving his dream, and has instead stayed true to his own quirky nature. Boyle has been outspoken about his intent to write the way he wants to and has become noted for his unconventional appearance. As Hennessy notes, "Boyle has created a zany image for himself by accentuating his frizzy hair and wearing punk clothing while affecting a semiserious scowl." Given the great lengths to which Boyle goes in the story to label Baldasare an outsider, and the fact that Baldasare is the only truly happy character at the end of the story, it is likely that Boyle gave "The Underground Gardens" a positive spin to send the message that outsiders win in the end□regardless of what anybody thinks of their unconventional lifestyles.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on "TheUnderground Gardens," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2004.

Critical Essay #2

Guyette is a longtime journalist. He received a bachelor of arts degree in English writing from theUniversity of Pittsburgh. In this essay, Guyette discusses Boyle's ability to take a story based in fact and transform it into a work of literature.

In his short story "The Underground Gardens"□ part of a collection published in 2001 titled *After the Plague*□author T. Coraghessan Boyle creates what appears to be a fable that is both beautifully written and extremely poignant. A man, inspired by love, begins digging. Using nothing but a pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow, the man□a poor, uneducated laborer□continues his back-breaking toil until he has created a sprawling underground home he hopes will so impress his beloved that she will take his callused hands in marriage. What could be more "fantastic," in the strictest sense of that word? It is like a rapturous dream, the stuff of pure fantasy. That sense of incredibility is carried through to the end as the author seems to opt for a climax that takes a sorrowful chronicle of romantic tragedy and transforms it into something pure and inspirational. Instead of concluding this story on a note of heartbreak when the woman runs from what she perceives as the insanity of the man's enterprise, the protagonist, his body beaten and bones broken but with his spirit still intact, envisions an even more elaborate underground world. Rather than succumb to despair and depression over the loss of his love, the spurned suitor begins clawing his way toward a vision even more impossibly grand than the one with which he began.

Upon reading this story, one is tempted to describe it as "fabulous," meaning that it explores a mythic world where the hero is capable of superhuman feats, much like Hercules performing his twelve labors. There is only one problem with depicting this tale in that way: "The Underground Gardens" is based in fact. There really was an Italian immigrant by the name of Baldasare Forestiere who, at the beginning of the last century, bought 70 acres of land in California with the intent of creating a vineyard. To his dismay, he learned too late that he had been duped into handing over his life's savings for a piece of property covered with a layer of hardpan rock just beneath the topsoil, making agriculture impossible. But he did not let that setback break his spirit. His body strengthened by years of labor digging subway tunnels in Boston and New York, he did construct an underground home beneath the thick sheet of hardpan with the hopes that his true love would be truly enamored with both his labors and its ingenious results. And, as with Boyle's story, the woman recoils at the thought of living underground and rejects his proposal of marriage. Boyle ends his story with Forestiere experiencing a vision so clear and precise and full-blown that it seems as if it could be divinely inspired. In reality, Forestiere worked for nearly 40 years to bring that vision to fruition, creating a subterranean wonderland of more than 90 rooms spread across seven acres. It is a marvelous, brilliantly conceived structure replete with fruit trees and grapevines, a fishpond, grottoes, and a ballroom.

So, what is it that makes Boyle's story a piece of literature rather than a biographical sketch? As with other of his works, such as the novel *The Road to Wellville,* Boyle takes a real-life character and uses him to explore specific aspects of our society. In this case

he touches on a number of issues, including the discrimination and degradation immigrants to this country faced in the past and, often, still face today. Like Forestiere, these people, through their labor and their creativity, rise above the prejudice they face to build a society that is better and stronger than the one that greeted them.

But "The Underground Gardens" is more than just a social critique. This story tackles a broader, more universal issue by asking and answering the question: what separates man from other animals. This issue is established in the first paragraph when Boyle writes this of Forestiere: "As a young man in Boston and New York he burrowed like a rodent beneath streets and rivers, scouring the walls of subway tubes and aqueducts, dropping his pick, lifting his shovel, mining dirt." Soon afterward, Boyle depicts the shanty□little more than a "glorified chicken coop," really□that Forestiere had constructed. Boyle writes:

It was a shelter that was all, a space that separated him from the animals, that reminded him he was a man and not a beast. *Men are upright,* his father told him when he was a boy, *and they have dominion over the beasts. Men live in houses, don't they? And where do the beasts live,* mio figlio? *In the ground, no ? In a hole."*

Given this, it is possible to look upon a man like Forestiere as something less than human, an illiterate beast of burden toiling his entire life beneath the earth, clawing at soil to dig himself an elaborate burrow. He is a man who has no appreciation for the niceties of civilization. Only once does he seek out some form of entertainment, a visit to a burlesque show. But even that he can't enjoy because he so frets over the few cents he feels he has squandered over this lone night out.

In the end, not even love is redemptive. How can it be when it is not returned, even though it is epic and soul stirring? How else would one describe a love that would motivate a man to spend two years digging beneath the ground in an attempt to woo a woman who, at the very best, has more than her share of flaws? And when his beloved Ariadne rejects him because he lives in the ground like some animal and turns instead for marriage to a mean-spirited drunk, how does Forestiere attempt to win her back? With more digging. It borders on insanity, really. Boyle, who writes with beautifully vivid prose, describes with heart-breaking clarity how Forestiere hopes that this girl who is wholly unworthy of such magnificent devotion, this girl with whiskers like a cat and "hands like doughballs fried in lard," will gaze out her window to see his muscles and sinews flex as he sweats and strains to create the mute communication of a heart. It is all he has to offer, because he is unable to put his words down on paper and spell out his love in a letter.

In the end, what separates man from the animals is his ability to dream. A mole burrows into the ground to create shelter. That, too, is what Forestiere did. The difference is that he did it in the hopes that his efforts would win him the woman of his dreams. And when that failed, instead of caving in to depression, he became inspired simply by an idea itself. He dreamed not just of shelter□that he already had. He dreamed of creating a palace that would stand as a testament to his own particular genius. He dreamed of creating an underground paradise that would let the world know that he had not just

survived and toiled during his time on this earth but had created something magnificent that would live on long after he departed. He dreamed of a legacy that would carry his name: Baldasare Forestiere'sUnderground Gardens. Then he fulfilled that dream, setting him apart not just from the animals but also from many of his fellow men. Few people ever dream with such grandeur, and fewer still ever achieve such greatness.

In the process of fulfilling his dream Baldasare Forestiere inspired others, including Boyle himself, who was so moved by the life's work of a poor immigrant that he created a beautiful and moving piece of literature that reads as if it were a fable.

Source: Curt Guyette, Critical Essay on "TheUnderground Gardens," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2004.

Critical Essay #3

Hill is a freelance writer and editor who specializes in literature. In the following essay, Hill analyzes the contrasts between the aboveground and subterranean environments in "TheUnderground Gardens" and argues that these elements illustrate Baldasare's achievement of greater self-knowledge and independence.

"TheUnderground Gardens" opens with an epigraph that quotes Franz Kafka's story "The Burrow." It's a fitting introduction: "The Burrow" features an unnamed narrator (perhaps an animal, but with very human concerns) who, in typically drawn-out Kafka fashion, details his anxieties about his subterranean home. At times, his worries about the security of his burrow and the dangers that lie aboveground grow so extreme that he is unable to approach the opening that leads to the outside world.

Likewise, "The Underground Gardens" deals with the division between the world above and the world below. T. Coraghessan Boyle drives this point home with both the larger events of the story's plot and the smaller details of description. When combined, these elements create a rich story that contrasts high and low, up and down. The vertical positioning of people and things is stressed repeatedly. When linked to the larger ideas they stand for, the surface and subterranean worlds become important clues that lead to a deeper understanding of the story and, more specifically, the insight Baldasare gains at its conclusion.

A man buys a plot of inhospitable land. He falls in love. He builds an elaborate underground residence in hopes of winning his beloved, but he loses her. He ends with a vision of making an even more elaborate subterranean palace. These events are interesting in themselves, but what else is at stake? To arrive at an answer, it's necessary to consider larger ideas that might be implied in the concepts of above and below. In other words, if the surface and subterranean worlds are considered as symbols or metaphors, what do they mean?

Those things existing above the ground are generally linked to material success and a conventional domestic lifestyle that includes a comfortable home and a family. Initially, these elements□wealth, home, and marriage□are associated with independence, and they are the very things that Baldasare was denied in Sicily by virtue of his not being the eldest child. It could also be said that these are some of the key ingredients of the so-called American Dream that drew millions of immigrants to theUnited States.

The subterranean world is treated in two ways: Initially, it's considered a lesser, inhuman place. This is made clear in Baldasare's memories of his father's words:

Men are upright, his father had told him when he was a boy, *and they have dominion over the beasts. Men live in houses, don't they ? And where do beasts live,* mio figlio? *In the ground, no ? In a hole.*

But in the course of the story, the underground world takes on a different meaning: it becomes associated with an alternative, creative life that allows Baldasare to utilize and benefit from his true talents.

What makes Baldasare such an interesting character is that he is attracted by both the upper world and the lower one. Early in the story, he envisions his future home as a "house of four rooms and a porch set on a hill." The description is telling: His dream is not only to live atop the ground but to gain as much elevation as possible. The vineyard he intends to create is likewise a thing of the surface world. Though the vines grow from the soil, the description "seventy acres buried in grapes" emphasizes the plants' aboveground fruit.

There is another part to Baldasare's dream: a family. He pictures it along with his hilltop house "his wife on the porch, his four sons and three daughters sprinting like colts across the yard." It's a picture-book vision of domestic bliss, and Baldasare clings to this family dream even after his vineyard proves unfeasible. Enter Ariadne. In Baldasare's mind, she's the woman on the porch. Her connection to the aboveground world is made clear by the many "upward" descriptions of her. When the couple walks down the street, Ariadne's height forces Baldasare to "reach up awkwardly" to take her arm. And, despite the weight that goes along with her "stout" size, his perception is that she "floated above her feet like one of the airships the Germans so prized." She also personifies the prosperity and happiness Baldasare expected to find in theUnited States: "She was the one," he tells himself. "She was the one he'd come toAmerica for." Later he marvels at the "sweet flow of familiar phrases that dropped so easily from her supple American lips."

Then there is the issue of money. It could be argued that one of the reasons that Baldasare fixates on Ariadne is that she is associated with material success, at least compared with his own humble means. But her wealth is also an obstacle. Given Baldasare's poverty, wooing Ariadne does not seem much more likely than creating a vineyard on his hardpan acreage. His thoughts outline the problem specifically:

What could he offer her, a girl like that who'd come all the way from Chicago, Illinois, to live with her uncle, the prosperous Greek a school-educated girl used to fine things and books.

To put it in common terms, Ariadne is "above" Baldasare in terms of wealth and social standing. But when he makes his attempt to overcome this obstacle, he does not go up, he goes down literally. He constructs a large home in the only manner he has available to him by carving it out of the earth.

In the process, Baldasare discovers that the subterranean world is not as subhuman as his father once declared. Baldasare initially justifies his underground life by saying that "he was just practical," and he notes how the hardpan soil is "impervious to the rain and sun, and more durable than any shingle or tile." But the aspect that most attracts him to the underworld is that it allows him to build and create in a way that was impossible on the surface. Art rather than practicality becomes his focus, as he compares his work to

the great architecture of the past. "He could already see a hallway there, a broad grand hallway, straight as a plumb line and as graceful and sensible as the arches the Romans of antiquity put to such good use in their time." His designs steadily grow more elaborate. "When he completed a passage or a room or carved his way to the sky for light, he could already see the next passage and the next room beyond that." There is also a spiritual element to his creativity. He connects his dome-shaped cellar with "the apse of the cathedral in which he'd worshipped as a boy," and at the end of the story he raises his hand to an underground wall "as if to bless some holy place."

Though inspired in the underworld, Baldasare is still faced with the difficulty of integrating his subterranean existence with his romantic quest. At one point he declares that "he was digging for her, for Ariadne," but this is no simple task. To bring together his underground home and an aboveground woman Baldasare must unite two worlds that, throughout the story, are shown to be opposites.

Which is why his plans unravel. Ariadne is bound up with material success and its conventional trappings. She simply cannot conceive of a home in the ground and refuses to consider a marriage that would make her inhabit such a place. (Unlike the mythic Ariadne whose thread gives Theseus a way to escape from the labyrinth, this Ariadne leaves her suitor to his underworld maze.) Boyle masterfully expresses the up and down of this situation in the passage where Baldasare attempts to show Ariadne his home.

He'd become insistent, and he had his hand on her arm, trying to lead her down from the carriage. ... He wanted to tell her, but the words wouldn't come, and he tried to articulate it all through the pressure of his hand on her arm, tugging, as if the whole world depended on her getting down from that carriage□ and it did, it did!

"Let go!" she cried, snatching her arm away. . . .

He tried to reach for her again□"Please," he begged, "please"□but she jerked back from him so violently the carriage nearly buckled on its springs.

Tug as he might, Baldasare cannot bring the two worlds□above and below□together. This is made doubly clear when he attempts to transfer his subterranean talents up to ground level. In excavating the valentine in the vacant lot, he exposes his greatest gift□his ability to dig□to the surface dwellers. It's to no avail: his work goes unacknowledged by Ariadne, and he receives a beating for his efforts.

These events give an interesting twist on Boyle's vertical metaphors: Ariadne and others in the above-ground world are people of the surface□not only because they desire conventional comforts but because their decisions are ruled by appearances, what's visible on the surface. Ariadne judges Baldasare solely on his wealth as expressed in a large, aboveground house. She gives no consideration to his character or his other accomplishments. Her desire to maintain the appearance of success leads her to choose a man who has "always got money in his pocket" despite the possibility that he's an alcoholic who is "mean as the devil."

These elements are part of a shift in attitude that becomes more pronounced as the story progresses. The tone of the descriptions begins to suggest that perhaps it is those in the upper world that are flawed, rather than the ground dweller. This can be seen when Baldasare ascends "two stories above the ground" to Siagris's walkup residence to pick up Ariadne for their first date. He's greeted by a grim and unpleasant atmosphere rather than "the fine things" he had previously imagined:

Up here, inside, it was even hotter. The Siagris children lay about like swatted flies, and Mrs. Siagris, her hair like some wild beast clawing at her scalp, poked her head around the corner from the kitchen. It was too hot to smile, so she grimaced instead and pulled her head back out of sight.

The term "beast" plays off the words that Baldasare's father used when dismissing the creatures of the underworld. The scene turns his thoughts on their head and reveals that life can be a beastly affair aboveground, even for "the prosperous Greek." Indeed, the story implies that those farther up the social hierarchy inFresno are in some sense deficient or diseased. Obesity is common among this group: Siagris' s shirt sticks to "the bulge of his belly"; Hiram Broadbent is a "[b]ig, fat man." After her arrival Ariadne grows so large that "she had to walk with a waddle," and she's afflicted with blotchy skin and a perpetual cold.

If the surface world and its inhabitants are flawed, what can be said of Baldasare? The meta-phoric implication is that he is "deep," as compared to the superficial people at ground level. Physical appearance is certainly not a high priority for him: Ariadne's "imperfections" seem to accentuate his resolve rather than reducing it. But the depth of his character is better expressed by the insight he achieves at the conclusion of the story.

Rather than being demoralized by his loss of Ariadne and yielding to the "life of disillusionment," he finds new purpose in his vision of theUnderground Gardens. He recognizes that love and matrimony were not his real goals after all. Instead, he has decided to cultivate his creative, unconventional existence while abandoning his previous dreams of material wealth and domesticity. Instead of being a monument to his beloved, theUnderground Gardens become an end in themselves.

So self-knowledge becomes Baldasare's reward. This fits well with the theme of subterranean digging. It could be said that his excavations serve as a symbol for digging inside himself, finding his true emotions, and discovering what he finds most important. In psychoanalytical terms, it could be said that he mines his subconscious to come to a better understanding of himself and his desires.

Does this mean that he has completely abandoned the American Dream that inspired him originally? Not entirely, because even though he has given up on marriage and seems less concerned with gaining material wealth, another of his goals remains intact. He wants to control his own destiny. "He'd dreamed of independence," the story states at one point, and the vision of theUnderground Gardens is certainly a move toward doing things his own way.

The main change that has taken place by the end of the story is that he has rejected the superficial trappings of independence. Baldasare's revised American Dream is not based on getting rich or on being a respectable family man. It's about having the freedom to build a monumental creation so that people could "see what he'd accomplished in his time on earth." Or, more accurately, what he'd accomplished *beneath* the earth, because it's the essential, underlying things that most inspire him.

Source: Jeff Hill, Critical Essay on "TheUnderground Gardens," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 2004.

Adaptations

Boyle's novel *Budding Prospects* was produced as an audiobook in 1994 by Books on Tape.

Boyle's novel*Drop City* was produced as an audiobook in 2003 by Audio Books Unabridged.

Boyle's novel *A Friend of the Earth* was produced as an audiobook in 2000 by Books on Tape.

Boyle's novel *The Road to Wellville* was adapted as a feature film in 1994 by Columbia Pictures. The film, written and directed by Alan Parker, featured an all-star cast, including Anthony Hopkins, Bridget Fonda, Matthew Broderick, John Cusack, and Dana Carvey. It is available on DVD and VHS from Columbia Tristar Home Video.

Boyle's story collection *Without a Hero* was produced as an audiobook in 1994 by Books on Tape.

Topics for Further Study

Research the average life span of an Italian American immigrant in the early 1900s. Discuss some of the sociological factors that determined this average life span.

Research the caverns, natural or otherwise, that exist today in central California. Write an in-depth report about one set of caverns□other than theForestiere Underground Gardens□including when it was created, how it was formed, and its estimated value as a modern-day tourist attraction.

Compare the lives of Italian American immigrants to the lives of other immigrants inAmerica in the early 1900s. Choose the ethnic group that you think had it the worst during this time period. Choose one influential figure from this group and write a biography about this person, including how his or her actions either improved or degraded the ethnic group's reputation.

Research the average size of a cellar in the early 1900s. Using this research, as well as the size clues given in this story, guess how big Baldasare's cellar is and figure out how many cubic yards of dirt would need to be removed to create this space. Make a chart that compares this volume of dirt to the volumes of several other modern-day structures.

In the story, Baldasare falls in love with Ariadne while drinking his coffee and eating his hamburger sandwich at Siagris' Drugstore. Research the types of food that would likely be offered in such an establishment in the early 1900s. Create a menu that lists all of these items, including early 1900s-era prices.

Compare and Contrast

1900s: Although the population shift caused by California's 1849 Gold Rush has slowed, immigrants of all ethnicities continue to come to California, attracted by the promise of land or work.

Today: More than 30 percent of all foreign-born people in the United States live in California. Since California is a Mexican border state, one of the continuing concerns is the flood of illegal immigration fromMexico. The dangers of unregulated immigration also becomes a hot topic in all of America following terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, which ignite a war on terrorism and a widespread fear of some foreigners, especially those of Middle Eastern descent.

1900s: Following widespread irrigation of the land in the late nineteenth century, California's agricultural output increases. In addition to vineyards□introduced mainly by European settlers in the mid-nineteenth century□the state also boasts many citrus orchards, such as those for oranges and lemons.

Today: California grows more than 50 percent of all fruits and vegetables marketed in theUnited States, and produces more than 90 percent of all domestic wines. The state also produces several specialty crops, including artichokes, avocados, dates, kiwifruit, olives, prunes, and raisins.

1900s: AsAmerica's population grows and urban areas expand, cities build subways and other forms of mass transportation, greatly enhancing the modern infrastructure.

Today: Following the digital revolution of the late twentieth century, fiber optic cables and other forms of modern infrastructure□designed to transport large amounts of data at high speeds□ are installed underground and in various buildings in both urban and suburban areas.

What Do I Read Next?

In "The Underground Gardens," Baldasare lives underground, as his father once told him the animals do. In Boyle's first collection of short stories, *The Descent of Man* (1979), each story examines humanity's reversion to an animal-like state. This quirky collection of stories includes a woman who falls in love with an ape, a man who risks physical harm to win an eating contest, and a group of pillaging Norsemen who burn books which represent a threat to their barbarian lifestyle.

Boyle's novel *East Is East* (1991) tells the story of Hiro Tanaka, a Japanese man who comes to theUnited States to try to find his American father. Like Baldasare, Hiro has visions of finding a new life inAmerica, where he thinks that a mixed-race man such as himself will be accepted. His dreams, however, are thwarted when he lands inGeorgia and experiences racism, among other challenges.

Boyle's novel *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995) focuses mainly on two couples in Southern California an affluent American family and an illegal immigrant family fromMexico. The book explores the lifestyles, attitudes, and challenges of these two couples, as well as the struggle to keep immigrants out ofAmerica, which was itself founded by immigrants.

Italo Calvino was one of the most quirky Italian writers of the twentieth century. His collection of short stories, *Gli amori difficili* (1970) was translated into English by William Weaver, Archibald Colquhoun, and Peggy Wright as *Difficult Loves* (1984). This collection explores the idea of love in all of its forms.

Don't Tell Mama!: The Penguin Book of Italian American Writing (2002), edited by Regina Barreca, contains selections of Italian American fiction and nonfiction writing from the 1800s to the present. The nearly one hundred contributors include such well-known figures as David Baldacci, Don DeLillo, Jay Leno, Mario Puzo, and Ray Romano.

Boyle has noted in interviews that one of his professional influences was Latin American writer Gabriel García Márquez. In García Márquez's collection *Doce cuentos peregrinos,* published in Madrid in 1992, the stories feature the trials and tribulations of Latin American characters abroad inEurope. Translated by Edith Grossman as *Strange Pilgrims: Twelve Stories,* the collection was published by Knopf in 1993

Further Study

Cosco, Joseph P., *Imagining Italians: The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880-1910,* State University of New York Press, 2003.

Cosco draws on history, literary criticism, and cultural studies to explore the effect of Italian Americans on national identity and vice versa, during the years of 1880□1990, a time when many Italians immigrated toAmerica.

DiStasi,Lawrence, ed., *The Big Book of Italian American Culture,* Sanniti Publications, 1996.

This book profiles the lives of many famous and ordinary Italian Americans, including a discussion of Baldasare Forestiere and his underground gardens.

Guglielmo, Jennifer, and Salvatore Salerno, eds., *Are Italians White?: How Race Is Made inAmerica,* Routledge, 2003.

This thought-provoking collection of original essays examines how and why the concept of whiteness became important to Italian Americans, as well as how various immigrants have dealt with racism in American society. The book also explores the contributions that Italian Americans have made to American culture.

Leffingwell,Randy, *California Wine Country: The Most Beautiful Wineries, Vineyards, and Destinations,* Voyageur Press, 2002.

Although technically a photo travel guide, Leffingwell's book provides an in-depth, illustrated look at California's wine country, including the area of central California where "The Underground Gardens" takes place.

McClurg, Sue, and Kevin Starr, *Water and the Shaping of California: A Literary, Political, and Technological Perspective on the Power of Water, and How the Effort to Control It Has Transformed the State,* Heyday Books, 2000. In "The Underground Gardens," Baldasare realizes that water is the key to growing his lush grapevines.

This engaging, multifaceted documentary history of California's water dependence includes more than 200 photos and drawings that illustrate the unique political, economic, and social issues that have surrounded the state's water usage. The book also includes literary selections from some of California's best-known authors.

McWilliams, Carey, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California,* University of California Press, 2000.

First published in 1939, McWilliams's landmark exposé explores the effect of corporate agriculture in California on migrant workers, labor groups and California's economy from the nineteenth century□ when much of the available land in California was snatched up□until the 1930s.

Starr, Kevin, *Americans and the California Dream:*

1850-1915, Oxford University Press, 1986.

In this first book of a multi-part series, Starr explores the early history of California, including the many alluring factors that drew people to the region, such as the Gold Rush. The book is thoroughly researched, and discusses both famous and little-known figures in California history.

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Patterson, David, "Love and Madness in America," in the *Washington Times,* March 29, 1998, p. 7.

Regardie, Jon, "Boyle's Life," in*Los Angeles Magazine,* Vol. 45, No. 10, October 2000, p. 30.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Short Stories for Students

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

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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