War Is Kind Study Guide

War Is Kind by Stephen Crane

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Contents

Introduction

"War is Kind" is the first poem of Stephen Crane's second collection of poems, *War is Kind and Other Lines,* published in 1899, less than a year before he died. The poem is sometimes referred to by its first line, "Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind." The subject of the poem is war and its effects. In this way it echoes the stories and scenes from Crane's Civil War novel, *The Red Badge of Courage.* Though Crane had been turned down because of poor health when he volunteered to enlist in the U.S. Navy, he saw his share of war and death as a journalist, covering conflicts in Greece, Puerto Rico, Cuba, andSpain. When Crane published *War is Kind and Other Lines* he and his wife, Cora, were deeply in debt. Having already established his literary reputation at 23 as the author of *The Red Badge of Courage* and many newspaper stories on wars around the globe, Crane was able to secure an advance for the collection.

Many of the short parable-like, densely imagistic lyrics in the collection deal with God's absence, the indifference of nature, the ironies of war, and the vagaries of love. "War is Kind" itself is a 26-line poem in five stanzas focusing on the emotional loss of three women whose lover, father, and son, respectively, have died in war. Crane's detailed snapshots of the fallen men in the first, third, and fifth stanzas evoke the savagery of war and its inherent cruelty. The indented second and fourth stanzas function as the poem's chorus, and provide more generalized images of war and cutting statements about the military. The poem's speaker, simultaneously sympathetic with the victims of war and cynical about the purposes of war, implicitly criticizes the image of the romantic hero, showing in graphic scenes the realities of battlefield death and the emotional torment it causes for those left behind.

Author Biography

Born inNewark, New Jersey, on November 1, 1871 to Mary Helen Peck Crane, Stephen Crane was the last of fourteen children. His father, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane, was an elder in the District of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Newark and, later, the Methodist pastor in Port Jervis, New York. After his father died in 1880, Crane and his mother moved toAsbury Park, New Jersey, where during the summers he helped his brother, Townley, with his news service.

At fifteen, Crane enrolled at the Hudson River Institute, a lightweight military prep school, but he never developed a fondness for formal education, flunking out of Lafayette College as an engineering student and then dropping out ofSyracuse University after one term. AtSyracuse, however, Crane met Hamlin Garland, the well-known realist writer who influenced Crane's style. Later, he also met and became fast friends with William Dean How-ells, a champion of realist writing and a leading American literary critic. Although both his parents wrote (primarily religious articles) and two of his brothers were journalists, Crane was mostly a self-taught writer. After his aborted formal education he took newspaper jobs in New Jersey and New York, writing sketches and a novel, *Maggie: Girl of the Streets,* about the urban poor and, eventually, writing the novel *The Red Badge of Courage,* a psychological portrait of Henry Fleming, a fictional soldier during the Civil War, which made Crane famous. Crane is not considered a major poet, but did publish a few volumes including *The Black Riders* and *War is Kind and Other Lines.* His *Collected Poems* also include "Three Poems," discovered in 1928 inJacksonville, Florida. Crane, who once commented that all life is war, covered many wars as a journalist, reporting on the Spanish-American war, the Greco-Turkish war, and the Cuban insurrection, primarily for the Hearst and Bachellor news syndicates. Always in poor health, Crane suffered a tubercular hemorrhage and died in 1900, just 29 years old.

Poem Text

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.
Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom
A field where a thousand corpses lie.
Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.
Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.
Mother whose heart hung humble as a button

On the bright splendid shroud of your son.

Do not weep.

War is kind.

Plot Summary

Stanza 1:

The title alerts us to the ironic tone of the poem, as it is very difficult to imagine war being kind in any way. The opening stanza confirms that tone, as it addresses the lover of a soldier who has died in battle, telling her not to weep at his death. We are then presented a melodramatic image of that death, with the dying soldier throwing his "wild hands towards the sky/ And ... [his] affrighted steed ... running on alone." Since this poem was originally published, the image of the riderless horse galloping away from its fallen owner has become a staple of Western movies.

Stanza 2:

The speaker now presents more generalized images and statements about war, as opposed to the close-up image in the opening stanza. These lines convey a sense of the soldiers' exhaustion, futility, and resignation, as they fight with the flag ("unexplained glory") flying overhead. The speaker continues with his bitter irony when describing the battlefield "where a thousand corpses lie." The "great" battle-god alluded to might be Mars, the god of war in Roman mythology. This stanza, along with the fourth, functions as a refrain, as its third and sixth lines are repeated in each, and as a chorus. In Greek tragedies the chorus comments on characters and events, frequently making moral judgements about them. These lines underscore the senselessness of war and also touch on Crane's attitude towards the stupidity and insidiousness of the military. He adopts a condescending tone towards the soldiers as well, describing them as "little souls." By saying that "These men were born to drill and die," the speaker at once draws attention to the soldiers' (and by extension, all of humanity's) lack of choice in life, and the futility of the purpose that *has* been given to them. It is important to note that in this stanza the speaker condemns the military as a whole, while in the first, third, and fifth stanzas, he remains sympathetic to individual victims, themselves part of the military.

The rhythm and rhyme of this stanza and the fourth also underscore the ironic nature of the poem, as the chaotic experience of war and of dying and mourning, are represented in an orderly structure. Lines one, four, and five are examples of imperfect rhyme which utilize the consonants "m" and "n," in "regiment," "them," and "kingdom." Lines three and six employ true rhyme, as the correspondence of the sounds is exact in "die" and "lie." Line two is an imperfect rhyme with three and six, as the word "fight" echoes the "i" in "die" and "lie."

Stanza 3:

In this stanza the speaker implores a daughter whose father has been killed in war not to cry. Again, we are presented with a close-up and graphic image of the dying soldier,

this time tumbling "in the yellow trenches," and pounding his chest desperately before dying. "Yellow" can be read a number of ways in this passage. First, it may denote the life-affirming image of sunlight, underscoring the tragic irony of the soldier's death. But yellow also suggests sickness and disease, and it is quite easy to see the soldier falling among the jaundiced bodies of his comrades. Thirdly, it is a color associated with cowardice, a theme which Crane explores in *The Red Badge of Courage.* Given the ironic tone of this poem, the first reading seems most appropriate. The tactile images here (tumbling, gulping, raging) also emphasize the physi-cality of war and its toll on the human body.

Stanza 4:

As in the second stanza, we are presented with an image of the flag, this time "swift" and "blazing." The fierceness of this description leads into the refrain that "These men were born to drill and die," underscoring not only the brutal nature of war but of a society, a world, which programs human beings for particular malicious purposes. Crane believed that in large part human beings' destinies are determined by biological as well as social determinants, and that free will plays only a small role in our lives. Crane emphasizes the cynical view that the men will do what they are told is right when he says "Point for them the virtue of slaughter, / Make plain to the excellence of killing." The tone is not only ironic here, but despairing, as the speaker describes something he thinks can be no other way.

Stanza 5:

The simile in the first line□"Mother whose heart hung humble as a button"□connects the mother's mourning with the smallest detail of her son's clothing, filling the comparison with pathos. A button is humble because it is small and unassuming. This comparison also emphasizes what Crane sees as the unimportance or "smallness" of victims of war to the powers that be. The poem ends with the mourning of a mother for her fallen son because this relationship, perhaps more than any other, carries the highest degree of emotional resonance. There is no consoling the mother.

Themes

Natural Law

In "War is Kind" Crane emphasizes the psychological torment that dying soldiers and their loved ones endure instead of focusing on their heroic or patriotic behavior. He desires to present the world as he sees it rather than the way he wants it to be. Much of Crane's poetry and fiction depict how human beings behave in extreme circumstances, whether that be how the impoverished survive on the streets of New York City, how men in a lifeboat interact when faced with the prospect of drowning, or how soldiers behave while bullets and shrapnel flies around them. His deterministic philosophy, a feature of naturalism, is evident in the graphic ways he represents the soldiers' deaths. They die alone, fearful and full of rage, in a field "where a thousand corpses lie." Unlike some of his prose work which attempts to render humanity with a more detached, scientific eye, "War is Kind" also makes a moral judgement about the seeming "naturalness" of war, the speaker implicitly ridiculing the regiment which teaches the soldiers "to drill and die" and "Point[s] for them the virtue of slaughter." This judgement suggests that in this work, at least, Crane sees the possibility that things could be different. Although sympathetic with the suffering of the dying, he is outraged at the institutions which sanction war, in this case the military itself, represented by the regiment, which "make[s] plain ... [to the soldiers] the excellence of killing." He expresses this outrage in his bitterly ironic refrain that "war is kind."

Patriotism

"War is Kind" implicitly questions the usefulness and validity of patriotism as an attitude and an ideology. The flag, an emblem of national pride which the speaker calls "the unexplained glory," flies above the soldiers marching to their deaths on the battlefield. Its "unexplainedness" points to the speaker's belief that it cannot be explained because there is nothing rational about men fighting and dying for a symbol. As a symbol of national identity and military authority, the flag commands respect. However, Crane represents it as a marker of fascis-tic might which demands total allegiance. Under the flag, soldiers are taught "the excellence of killing" and "the virtue of slaughter." Assigning such sinister motives to a country furthers the idea that patriotism is not only an act of blind obedience, but that it is reserved for those who do not have the ability or capacity to questions what being loyal to one's country really means. Crane highlights this idea when he says that such adherents to the flag "were born to drill and die," suggesting that there was never any other choice for them. Patriotism was a strong influence in Crane's time as it is today. In its extreme and most public form, it fosters an almost militaristic devotion to the decisions a country makes, wrong or right. Many U.S. citizens chastised Jane Fonda during the Vietnam War, for example, when she publicly questioned the United States' involvement in that conflict. However, Fonda was also acting in a patriotic manner (which she has often claimed), for she wanted her country

to do the morally correct thing. Crane fashions theUnited States as not only sinister but as uncaring and cruel, as it offers those who died fighting for it no solace.

"War is Kind" is Crane's free verse meditation on war and loss. The poet utilizes concrete imagery and irony to compose a portrait of the cosmic futility of war. Concrete imagery describes the world in terms of the senses, what we experience with our sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing. By appealing to our senses, Crane can more effectively show the horrors of war directly. Tactile imagery is especially prevalent in the poem and highlights the horrific effects of battle on the human body. The tone of his descriptions is ironic, that is, he does not mean that war is kind, but that it is cruel and unjust. Another example of irony occurs in the second stanza when the speaker says "Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom ... " It is also ironic that war's "kindness" means that the soldiers' deaths bring them release from their suffering.

Style

The poem employs two levels of diction, or word choice. The language of the first, third, and fifths stanzas is plain and closer to everyday speech, while the language of the indented second and fourth stanzas is embellished and inflated, and uses more formal verse conventions such as end rhyme. The contrast between these two styles adds to the poem's complexity, and furthers the author's intention to deflate the idea of romantic heroism in all of its guises.

Historical Context

Although Crane never served in theUnited States military, as a journalist he covered a number of conflicts for various newspapers and news services during the mid-to-late 1890s, including the Greco-Turkish War and the Spanish-American War. On page 91 of his study of Crane's life and work, Stephen Cady discusses Crane's compassion and empathy for the everyday suffering of war victims and quotes from an article Crane wrote about refugees: "There is more of this sort of thing in war than glory and heroic death, flags, banners, shouting, and victory." Crane's compassion transcended national identity, as he saw suffering resulting from war as a universal human problem rather than a primarily political one. Thus the flag in "War is Kind," though associated with a particular country, actually stands for all countries.

The Spanish-American War, which Crane covered for the *New York World,* lasted less than a year from declaration to treaty. However, the conflict between Cuba and Spain, which precipitated the war, was simmering when Crane was sent as a reporter toCuba in 1896. In 1898 President McKinley ordered the battleship *Maine* to Havana harbor inCuba as a show of American might and as tacit support of the insurgents' position. Shortly after its arrival the ship was destroyed by a mysterious bomb blast and 250 men were lost. Although questions remain as to the source of the blast, it was enough of a reason for the United States to declare war onSpain, which the American public supported wholeheartedly. Spain capitulated within three months, and as a condition of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1898 gave up control of Cuba and ceded the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to theUnited States. The Hawaiian Islands had been annexed by an act of congress earlier that year, and now theUnited States stood as an imperial power with substantial overseas territories. Many inhabitants of these territories, however, grew to disdain theUnited States' interference in their domestic affairs and fought against them. In thePhilippines, for example, rebel leader Emilio Aguinaldo led insurgents against Americans, who responded by destroying villages and forcing large numbers of peasants and rebels into concentration camps. All told, more than two hundred thousand Filipinos were killed in the uprising.

Crane is often cited as saying that all life is war, and biographers point out Crane's obsession with war, some suggesting that he had a death wish. As evidence of this, they recite the story of Crane in Cuba, strolling among soldiers alongSan Juan Hill. He wore a long white coat and refused to duck down even amidst a hail of sniper fire. Cady links Crane's behavior to the writer's desire to prove himself as a *true* war correspondent, someone who was a participant in what he wrote about, not just an observer. But Crane's behavior also seemed to signal that he was fated to die early, which is apropos of someone who believed that humanity's destiny was in its genes and immediate environment. Critic Daniel Hoffman agrees. In his article "The Many Red Devils upon the Page: The Poetry of Stephen Crane," Hoffman suggests that Crane's fascination with danger was in part a result of his rebellion against the religious orthodoxy of his family: "Not to make too much of genetic determinism, there does yet seem a thread of predestination in Stephen Crane' s fascination with war (and with other perilous situations)," Hoffman writes.

Various strains of determinism were in the air in the late nineteenth century, as thinkers such as Karl Marx and Charles Darwin conceived of human behavior as a result of economic circumstances and biological imperatives, respectively. In literature Crane is often cited as being one of the first American naturalist writers. Naturalism is the term used to describe such deterministic thinking. Naturalist literature tends to present characters who are controlled by their passions or material environment, and who have very limited choices in their lives. In addition to Crane, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American practitioners of literary Naturalism include Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and John Dos Passos.

Critical Overview

Bettina L. Knapp writes that *War is Kind* is a both a gloomy and an emotionally charged collection of poems "replete with scenes of martyrdom and bone-hard metaphors." Knapp writes: "Despair, a morbid presence, permeates the world as individuals are forced to endure the agony of war." Knapp calls the title poem of the collection "one of the most extraordinary war poems of all time." Commenting on the historical reception of Crane's poetry in his book-length study of Crane's verse, Daniel Hoffman observes that "Crane's critics have often asserted that his verse did not develop at all. Such critics apparently have been content to regard as typical of his second book the nine or ten poems which correspond in method to those of the first." Hoffman, however, disagrees with these critics, claiming that Crane's poetry had indeed evolved from *The Black Riders* to *War is Kind.* Hoffman claims that poems from *War is Kind* express Crane's shift from allegory to symbolism, and that the subject matter of the latter poems represent "experiences and states of feeling more complex than the simple attitudes of the allegorical poems." Of the poem "War is Kind," Hoffman praises Crane's use of juxtaposition and repetition, claiming that "The power of the poem is in its style. Crane's style was a more flexible instrument than most critics of his poetry have allowed." Writing in a more recent article, "Many Red Devils Upon the Page: The Poetry of Stephen Crane," Hoffman waxes even more admiringly, claiming that "In American poetry Crane's poem ['War is Kind'] is worthy to stand beside those in Whitman's Drum-Taps (e.g., 'Come Up from the Fields, Father') and Melville's Battle-Pieces (e.g., 'The Portent, "Shiloh'). Despite the nation's experience of two world wars, Korea, andVietnam, no twentieth-century American poet has written of war's illusions and sufferings with like authority."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Screenwriter, poet, and essayist Chris Semansky 's most recent collection of poems, Blindsided, *has been published by 26 Books ofPortland, Oregon. In the following essay Semansky examines the imagery in Stephen Crane's "War is Kind, " linking it to the Imagist movement of the twentieth century and to the poetry of World War I.*

Stephen Crane's title poem from his second collection, *War is Kind and Other Lines,* is representative of his best work. It prefigures many of the modern imagist poets such as Amy Lowell and William Carlos Williams in its concise and hard-edged descriptions and focus on the "thingness" of the world, yet retains some of the didactic and sentimental qualities of nineteenth-century verse. Combined with a piercing ironic tone, these qualities add layers of complexity to a poem which on first reading appears relatively simple.

Imagism emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, just a little more than a decade after Crane's death. Formulated and popularized by writers such as Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme, Imagism was a revolt against mannered and overly emotional verse. Writing in her Preface to the imagist anthology, *Some Imagist Poets (1915-1917),* Amy Lowell spells out some of the features of Imagism. These include an openness to all subject matter, the use of everyday speech, and the presentation of a concentrated image. Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is perhaps the best-known Imagist poem. Pound relies on juxtaposition to present his vision of people at a train station:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd, Petals on a wet, black bough.

Implicit in these two images is how faces look like petals. The comparison is implied, and readers must make the connection. Crane employs a similar strategy in "War is Kind," only he juxtaposes showing with *telling,* that is, he gives us an image and then comments on it, rather than giving us two diverse images that suggest similarity. The imagery of Crane's first, third, and last stanzas can most profitably be seen in cinematic terms as rotating among medium shots, close-ups, and long shots. Directors use medium shots to frame the body from the waist up, emphasizing gestures. Close-ups usually frame the body from the chest up and emphasize facial expressions. Long shots often feature figures against landscapes, but from a distance. The first stanza, then, can be read as moving from a close-up, in which we can imagine the desperate look on the dying soldier's face as his hands flail about in a final gesture of surrender, to a long shot, in which we can see the dying soldier's horse galloping away, the distant figure of the falling soldier's hands in the sky, which dominates the background.

Framed by the speaker's seemingly faux consolation to the soldier's lover, this opening stanza prepares us for an elaboration of the bitterness and irony to follow. It is important to understand the comma in this first stanza. If we miss it, we miss the irony, and the pathos of the image. The second time the speaker tells the maiden not to weep, he says so for a reason: *"Because* [italics mine] your lover threw wild hands toward the sky / And the affrighted steed ran on alone ..." How are we to read this as a reason? Some critics

see the irony in the contrast between the women's tears and the fact that death will soon relieve the dying man of his suffering. But the irony is in the reason, which is *not* a reason. War is *not* kind. But does that mean that the speaker is being glib in imploring the maiden not to weep? Quite the contrary: rather, the speaker is encouraging the maiden to share in his own bitterness towards the forces that perpetuate war. The details of the dying soldier heighten the pathos of the scene and are meant to arouse readers' indignation.

The indignation of the speaker becomes even more apparent in the second stanza, which functions both as a chorus of sorts, and, in cinematic terms, as a "long shot":

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment.

Little souls who thirst for fight.

These men were born to drill and die.

The unexplained glory flies above them.

Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom□

A field where a thousand corpses lie.

We see the regiment from a distance, bodies strewn everywhere, and then we get commentary on the scene, as if from a voice-over narrator. The language is more inflated than the three stanzas detailing individual deaths, and more abstract. We are given more statement than description, and more transparent irony, in case we missed the irony of the first stanza. In his study of Crane' s poetry, critic Daniel Hoffman points out that these lines, which he says are spoken by an "intercalary chorus," are thick with "compelling rhythmic regularity□and rhyme." Hoffman writes: "There are rhymes 'die' and 'lie' in the set-in stanzas; wild, sky, affrighted, flies, bright; just these, and they ought to make a high lament. But of course they do nothing of the sort... .The poem takes place in the successful war of the prose ('unexplained, "gulped,' and so on) against the poetic appearance of lament." This formal quality of the lament, then, provides an almost hypnotic backdrop to the poem, as readers are told of the lemming-like behavior of the soldiers and the "[battle]field where a thousand corpses lie."

Alluding to the party responsible for the horror, the speaker smirks "Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom." This description, possibly an allusion to the Roman god of war, Mars, lends an almost epic quality to the passage. In its depiction of how war uses soldiers, Crane's poem also foreshadows some of the great antiwar poems of the first world war, chief among them Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est." Owen's poem, which came towards the end of the war, is that of a soldier whose responsibility is to fight, whereas Crane's poem is that of a correspondent whose job is to report. Both use bitter irony to comment on the ways in which governments perpetuate lies about the nature and purposes of war. Here is the last stanza of Owen's poem, in which the speaker addresses the author of children's books which romanticize war:

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace

Behind the wagon that we flung him in.

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face.

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;

If you could here, at every jolt, the blood

Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,

Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest

To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old lie: Dulce est decorum est

Pro patria mori.

Literally translated from Latin, these lines read "It is sweet and meet to die for one's country." Owen's poem can be read as an elaboration of Crane's in its graphic depiction of war death, its critique of romantic heroism, and its implicit denunciation of the institutions which sponsor war. Both explicitly question those who would see fighting for one's country as a glorious act.

We can see Crane's dying soldier, who "tumble [s] in the yellow trenches" in the third stanza in Owen's soldier dying from poison gas. Although chlorine gas was not yet used as a weapon of mass destruction in Crane's time, the concrete details that each poet provides gives a clear picture of the physical and psychological suffering soldiers endure. If anything, Crane is more accusatory than Owen in his tone and his words. The fourth stanza of "War is Kind" makes this plain:

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,

Eagle with the crest of gold,

These men were born to drill and die.

Point for them the virtue of slaughter,

Make plain to them the excellence of killing

And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

The acid cynicism in these lines burns. Using patriotic pride and the myth of heroism to sanction men's natural tendencies toward violence, the military and the government are condemned, though not named. The last stanza, an image of a mother weeping over the body of her fallen son, is the most heart-wrenching of all, as it underscores the hopelessness of victims, both living and dead. Hoffman says about "War is Kind" what many have said or would like to have said to those who have lost loved ones in war: "A domestic, terrible poem, what it whispers is: 'I would console you, how I would console you! If I honestly could.'"

Source: Chris Semansky, in an essay for *Poetry for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Adaptations

Project Gutenberg contains the entire texts for *Maggie, Girl of the Streets* and *The Red Badge of Courage:* http://promo.net/pg/_authors/i-_ crane_stephen_. html

The University of Texas atAustin maintains a website dedicated to Stephen Crane, his critics, and his admirers: http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/ -mmaynard/Crane/crane.html

In 1951 John Huston directed the film version of Crane's novel *The Red Badge of Courage* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Narrated by James Whitmore, and starring Audie Murphy and Bill Mauldin, the film went through heavy editing after negative previews.

Alan Oskvarek's search engine (www.good-net.com/thewall/) lets you search the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by name, hometown and branch of service. When a name is returned, it tells you at which panel and line the person's name can be found, along with the birthdate, length of service and how they died.

The following site, sponsored by the Public Broadcasting System, allows you to view sheet music covers, listen to popular songs from the Spanish-American War era, and read 1890s sheet music: http://www.pbs.org/crucible/music. html

Topics for Further Study

Find women who have lost a husband, lover, father, brother, or son in a military conflict and interview them. Write a description of the ways in which they have or have not accommodated their loss.

After viewing a few popular war movies, for example, *The Thin Red Line,Forest Gump, Full Metal Jacket, Platoon,* etc., compose an essay comparing and contrasting the ways in which Crane's description of battlefield suffering and death match up with late twentieth-century visual depictions of the same.

Choose a military conflict or war from the nineteenth century and research the material ways in which families who lost someone in the war suffered as a result. For example, what happened to the economic lives of women who lost husbands in war?

Rewrite Crane's poem, but without the irony. Also, update the imagery to represent a twentieth-century military conflict. Discuss the changes you made and why you made them.

Compare and Contrast

1895: Jose Marti and Maximo Gomez lead Cuban revolution against Spanish colonialists.

1896: Filipino nationalists revolt against the Spanish rule that has controlled thePhilippines since the sixteenth century.

1898: Months of tension between the United States andSpain climax in war.

1899: The Treaty of Paris is ratified by the Senate in a 57-27 vote. Under the terms of the treaty, the U.S. gains possession of Cuba,Puerto Rico. Guam, and for $20 million, thePhilippines.

Today: Although Guam and Puerto Rico remain U.S. territories, the Philippines andCuba are independent countries.

1890s: Just as newspaper stories promoted the conflict, popular songs celebrate the Spanish-American War by honoring its heroes and victories. Songs like "Brave Dewey and His Men" and "The Charge of the Roosevelt Riders" laud war heroes Commodore Dewey and Theodore Roosevelt. Other songs, like 'Ma Filipino Babe" and "The Belle of Manila," sentimentalized the struggles abroad and romanticized the idea of intervention.

Today: Films such as *Platoon, Hamburger Hill,* and *Full Metal Jacket* are explicitly critical ofAmerica's military interventions abroad, while other films such as *Rambo* and *Missing In Action* romanticize such interventions.

1892: The People's Party, sometimes known as the Populists, pushes for reforms to make government institutions more responsive to the public. Their candidate for president, General James Weaver, a former Union army officer, wins 8.5 percent of the popular vote.

1992: Ross Perot, a Texas billionaire businessman and a third party candidate for president, wins almost twenty percent of the popular vote.

Further Study

Crane, Stephen, *The Selected Poems of Stephen Crane,* Knopf, 1930.

This collection contains poems from *The Black Riders and Other Lines, War is Kind and Other Lines,* and *Three Poems.*

Hoffman, Daniel G., *The Poetry of Stephen Crane,* Columbia University Press, 1957.

Hoffman's study of Crane's poetry remains the best such study done to date.

Wertheim, Stanley and Paul Sorrentino, eds.,*The Correspondence of Stephen Crane,* Columbia University Press, 1988.

Sorrentino and Wertheim correct previous errors made in reporting Crane's letters and illuminate the personality of Crane. This collection is indispensable reading for those interested in Crane's life.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) 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, PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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

PfS 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 Poetry 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 PfS series.

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

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry 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 PfS, 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 Poetry 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 PfS, 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 Poetry 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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