EXPLICATION OF THE TEXT AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING
THE READING OF LITERATURE IN HIGH SCHOOL

DISSERTATION

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By

ESPY WALLACE MILLER, B. A., A. M.

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Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of Education
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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION

So vast is the field of research concerning reading and the teaching of reading that at present the accumulated annual summaries of such research number 2,500 separate reports.¹ This figure does not include pronouncements of specialists nor committee and sub-committee reports made by men and women who are concerned with ways of improving reading in American educational institutions. Despite such conscientious endeavors made by reading specialists, teachers, public-school and college administrators, and even some segments of an aroused public, there is general agreement among educators that Americans do not read as much, as well, nor as discriminatingly as the increased responsibility placed upon the ordinary citizen in an increasingly complex civilization demands. If then, Americans are not developing reading skills to the maximum, the responsibility for such a deficiency must be accepted by the public schools. With the extension of free compulsory, public education, it must be assumed that the schools have accepted responsibility for the

reading ability of the graduates of those schools. The present investigation is undertaken on the assumptions that Americans need increased skill in reading and that the responsibility for teaching skills in reading rests with the public schools. This study will be limited in scope to improving the reading of literature in high school.

Origin of the problem. Some fifteen years ago, when this writer was a young high-school English teacher, he was confronted with the problem of how to read literature with young people in an informative, enjoyable, comprehensive, and sensitive manner. True, early public and secondary-school training had had influence upon the young teacher's ability to read. True, he had taken numerous college literature courses. Yet, they had been of little help in developing sensitivity to literary art. On numerous occasions the writer experienced a sense of inadequacy when confronted with a group of ninth-grade pupils and a difficult poem, for example. How should one go about reading a poem with a group of adolescents so that they may share the poetic experience with the author, with each other, and with the teacher? What was the poet attempting to communicate? What significance had the images, the symbols, the figures, and the tone of the poem? How could the poet's experiences be made vital, real, and personal to the adolescent? Such questions repeatedly seared their way into the mind of the young teacher.
When the neophyte high-school English teacher looked back to his secondary-school and college literature classes, he found woefully little there that could be considered helpful in his becoming a more sensitive reader of literature. Much of his study had been of the traditionally factual type. Traditional literary study had concentrated upon the biography of the author, the milieu in which the author worked, the editions of his works, the characteristics of the writer, and the critical opinions which had evaluated the place of the author in the literary world. There had been much too little attention given to actual comprehension of and insight into what the author had to communicate.

In recent years there has been a growing acceptance of the belief that the major function of reading literature in the secondary school is that of assisting the adolescent to reach a better understanding of himself and his fellow human beings (a topic to be developed more fully in Chapter III). Professor Howard Francis Seely states his objectives of a literature program:

1. A literature program should increase our knowledge about life.
2. It should give an over-all, broader, and sharper insight into life.
3. It should give a fuller, clearer understanding of ourselves.2

2Unpublished class lecture, Education 670, "Teaching Literature in the High School," The Ohio State University, January 4, 1950.
Traditional methods of teaching literature as described above have not been satisfactory in any real sense since these methods have given undue attention to the facts about literature and only sparse and passing attention to reading and comprehending literature. The present investigation is offered as one endeavor to help find ways of improving the reading of literature in high school by means of a close reading of the text and an explication of that text.

Terms defined: explication and the new criticism. Inherent to the theory of reading literature accepted in this investigation is the Anglicized word explication, derived from the Latin explicatus, literally an unfolding. Actually the method of explicating, or unfolding, a poem is not new. The Greek critic Longinus gave some attention to a close reading of text as a method of literary criticism. As early as 1895, the French journal, Revue Universitaire, contained an article on explication de textes. Samuel Taylor Coleridge explicates some of Shakespeare in his literary criticism. I. A. Richards, in Practical Criticism, is among the first of modern literary critics to practice the method of explication.

A formal definition of explication formulated by Arms and Kuntz in Poetry Explication states that this method of reading literature is "the examination of a work of literature for a knowledge of each part, for the relations of these parts to each other, and for their relation to the
Such a definition of reading literature de-emphasizes facts about the author's life, prevailing critical opinions, and textual collation, while stressing a close reading of the composition. Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature* assert that "the natural and sensible starting point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves." Regrettably, the traditional teaching of literature has not done this.

Closely akin to the method of reading literature described above as explication of the text is the theory of literary criticism commonly known as the New Criticism. Proponents of the New Criticism advocate a close reading of the text as being a basis to understanding the object of inquiry. In the sense that the present investigation adheres to a close reading of the text, it may be said that this study can be classified in the vein of the New Criticism. At this point, however, the parallel between the method of this study and the method of the New Criticism becomes less and less discernible. Because the New Criticism has developed a subjective and jargonistic dialectic of its own, this writer finds the same deterrent to a clear

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3George Arms and Joseph M. Kuntz, *Poetry Explication*, p. 18.

understanding of a literary composition under the credo of the New Criticism as that which formed the basis of his objection to historical scholarship as is manifested in the traditional teaching of literature. In discussing the nature of explication as a method of reading literature, the writer has suggested that this is to be accomplished by a close analysis of the text. In a larger sense, the close reading of a number of literary selections will comprise the greater portion of this investigation. It is to a more specific and complete consideration of the method of this study that the writer now turns.

Method of procedure in the investigation. The major portion of this study will be devoted to producing a considerable number of examples of explication of literature being read at present in American high schools. The writer will offer no justification or attack upon the selection of the literature contained in six sets of anthologies of high-school literature analyzed as a means of determining common literary selections for exegesis. In conducting this investigation the writer will not defend nor attack the practice of using literary anthologies in the high-school English class. Since the six anthologies are widely employed in secondary schools throughout the United States, the writer will conduct the inquiry on the selections contained in the anthologies that are being read in high-school English classes.
After having analyzed six sets of anthologies, the writer will choose common selections according to the frequency of occurrence and will write explications of these literary compositions. In order to provide new and fresh reading material for the high-school English class the writer will prepare explications of some not-so-common selections. This investigator believes that written exegeses of some less familiar literary compositions will help the system, all too frequently invoked, of requiring high-school pupils to read the same literature on the same grade level year after year. Not only is the reading of the same "classics" deadening to the pupils who have to read them but as Professor Howard Francis Seely says, if the teacher "... doesn't turn over his stock-in-trade at least occasionally it's pretty sure to become shopworn, and so is he."  

Another principle which has been invoked as a guide in determining selections to include in this study is suggested by Professor Howard Mumford Jones. Writing in The English Journal, Jones declares:

I am in no sense saying that we should immediately abandon all the classics, or that

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5 For a complete list of authors, titles, and publishers of the high-school anthologies see p. 381.

we should immediately make copies of True Confessions the required textbooks in high-school classes. I am in no sense saying that students should not be given difficult work to read, nor do I deny that, unless we compel them to read better things than Curwood, they will not graduate from the Curwood level....But what I am saying is that, even with the simplest lists of classics commonly taught in high schools, the gap between the student and the classics is still too great, and that until this gap is bridged, we shall make no more perceptible progress with the great mass of our pupils than we are making now.

In choosing literary selections for this study the writer has attempted to bridge the gap between the familiar classic and the not-so-familiar literary work by striking a balance between these two classifications. Taking an over-all view of the intent and method of this proposed study, how does the project compare with modern trends in education? It is to a brief examination of some of the more recent developments in the field of education that this writer now turns.

Modern trends in education. Is the practice of explanation in keeping with latest trends in education? Teachers, administrators, citizens, thinkers, and critics of public schools in America differ widely about such educational problems as purpose, philosophy, curriculum, and classroom methods. At the same time, some trends in educational practice are discernible. There is increased concern that secondary education be made available to all who can benefit

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from such training. Educators are giving increased attention to the relationships between general and vocational education. Many schools are increasingly regarding the adolescent as a dynamic whole. High schools are moving in the direction of providing theory and training in democratic living. The adolescent is increasingly regarded as a distinct personality, having individual needs, drives, and problems. Matters of health, guidance, recreation, aesthetics, psychology are being given increased attention in the high school of today. Since the method of explanation is concerned with enabling the adolescent to become a more sensitive and perceptive reader of the printed word, any success which may result from this kind of training in the skill of reading must be judged to be within the matrix of modern trends in education.

In an age of mass communication, the very perpetuation of democratic ideals and practices may depend upon the kind of reader that is graduated from the public schools. Educators generally agree that one of the functions of the secondary school is that of providing sensitive readers. Professor Harold Alberty in Reorganizing the High-School Curriculum envisions the role of the secondary school as follows:

Clearly, the high school has a distinctive role to play in the perpetuation and refinement of our democratic way of life. It has an excellent
chance of success if it dedicates itself to this high purpose and proceeds intelligently and courageously to the task of reorganizing itself to meet the challenge of the times.

If recent trends in public education include increased concern for the growth and adjustment of the adolescent, what are some of the recent developments in the field of reading and how does this study relate to such trends?

Reading in modern education. Even though Chapter IV—"Nature and Status of Reading in High School"—of this study deals with the problem of reading in secondary school, brief comment upon the subject may be desirable in this introductory chapter. Earlier in the present chapter this writer pointed out that the method of explication in some ways is similar to the method of literary criticism commonly called the New Criticism. Douglas Waples in What Reading Does to People states that in the field of reading in public education "...serious study was first devoted to the problems of literary criticism." Waples recalls that even though little attention was given to any factors

8Harold Alberty, Reorganizing the High School Curriculum, p. 443.

9Douglas Waples et al., What Reading Does to People, p. 158.
other than the work under consideration, the application of literary criticism to particular books may be considered to mark the "prehistory" of reading instruction in public education. In a sense reading in public education has now come full cycle. The evolutionary trend in the field of reading can be traced through concern for such problems as rate of reading, eye movements in reading, reading difficulties, remedial reading, the psychology of reading, the sociology of reading, and achievement and comprehensive tests for reading. As the writer has pointed out earlier in this present chapter, the method of explication as it will be practiced in this study is, in a sense, the application of literary criticism to specific literary compositions for the purpose of determining what the work under consideration actually communicates. Waples, it will be recalled, believes that the study of reading was first begun by applying theories of literary criticism to specific works. How then does the method of explication fit into the reading program of the secondary school?

**Explication in the reading program.** Paul Witty asserts in *Reading in Modern Education* that "it is generally conceded that the modern high school should continue to give help and guidance in reading."¹⁰ Years ago English

¹⁰Paul Witty, *Reading in Modern Education*, p. 11.
teachers in the secondary schools assumed that their students were competent readers, and, as a result, little attention was given to instruction in reading. As witty shows, present trends in reading instruction in the high schools are such that teachers are increasingly assuming that many, even the vast majority of all students, are needful of some instruction in reading.

Reading formerly was considered a skill which could be acquired by means of drill in vocabulary, eye movements, oral reading, eye span, and increased rate of reading. Recent theories on the nature of reading include no such assumptions. Modern reading programs lay stress upon taking the pupil from his present level of reading as far forward as he is capable of going. Effort is made today to associate the student's interests, problems, and needs with his reading experiences. Reading is viewed as a means to the end of the student's continuous growth, as a means to reaching the goal of the adolescent's understanding of himself and his place in society. Witty concurs with this position when he asserts that--

Leaders in the field of English and in education concur in stressing the desirability of relating reading experiences to the purposes of the student. Hence, programs at the secondary-school level aim to satisfy the student's need for (a) efficient methods of reading different types of subject matter, (b) reading experiences
which help the student understand and adjust himself with increasing success and satisfaction to his personal environment.\textsuperscript{11}

Reading thus considered provides a program which will assist the student in becoming a more effective citizen.

How does the method of explication as it will be practiced in this study fit into the general practices of modern education, and into current theories of teaching reading? Modern trends in education, as it was pointed out earlier in this chapter, include such considerations as individualizing instruction and increasing concern for assisting the adolescent in becoming adjusted to his environment. Reading, it has been shown, is essential to the very perpetuation of the democratic way of life. Current practices in the high schools are based upon the tacit assumption that almost all students need some instruction in reading. How, then, does the method of explication assist and further the requirements of secondary education in fulfilling the needs of the modern adolescent?

Since the method of explication approaches the literary object as a written communication, earlier theories of teaching reading--routine vocabulary drill, exercises in eye span, and oral interpretation--are of secondary value.

Explication approaches each literary composition as a unique work which can be understood only after close and intimate scrutiny has been made of each word, phrase, clause, and sentence, and after the reader has examined and understood the work in its entirety. Consequently reading, which surely must include word study and oral interpretation as means to an end but not an end in themselves, is not a mechanical skill alone. Reading is a personal and intimate recreation by the reader of the author's experiences and ideas. Because teachers in the past have placed implicit faith in reading as a mastery of certain skills, close scrutiny of the literary composition as a personal communication has been neglected.

If reading is thus considered as a personal and intimate recreation of the author's experiences and ideas, always within the limitations and experiences of the reader himself, then the act of reading a literary work closely and intently under the method of explication is individualized instruction for the high-school student.

Explication in the reading program of the modern high school can make a significant contribution in breaking a self-perpetuating system which looms as a giant octopus to prevent and inhibit sensitive, perceptive reading. This system (Who can say where it first began?), considered from the graduate school downward, as this writer has repeatedly pointed out in this present chapter, is the
practice of teaching literature as a set of facts to be mastered, as a study of literary historiography, as a study of bibliography, as a study of biography.

In such a self-perpetuating system the cycle has not been broken. The method of this study requires the student to read carefully and intensely the literary selection under consideration. This is the very nature of *explication de texte*.

**Critical review of work in the field.** An American scholar who, in the history of the method of explication, early recognized the merits of this method of teaching reading was Rollo Walter Brown. In a book whose title is *How the French Boy Learns to Write*, Brown tells his reader that the French approach the method of *explication de Texte* as one of the most significant experiences of the entire educational process. As it is carried forward in the French school, *explication de texte* is not a series of meat-axe criticisms in which the teacher leaves only a chopped-up carcass for the edification of the pupil; it is not a dry study of words alone; and it is not an over-minute study of grammar or rhetoric. Brown reports that explication is, rather than any one of these, an undertaking that aims to seize upon and unfold an author's

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purpose and his meanings so that the pupil will be in a condition of mind to react with intelligence upon what he has read. The French exegesis of a literary work is not exclusively historical, biographical, or critical; it combines the best parts of all three.

How the French Boy Learns to Write presents no examples of explication. Brown's major purpose is that of studying French schools in order to help the teaching of English in America.

Two years after How the French Boy Learns to Write (1927) appeared, I. A. Richards published Practical Criticism (1929), a venture in close reading of texts. In an experiment conducted at Camrbidge University, Richards asked undergraduates reading English literature with a view to an Honours Degree to comment freely, in writing, upon poems which were provided for the students. Practical Criticism is the record of this experiment, containing examples of the explications written by the students. Richards supplies comments upon and analyses of the student explications. Thirteen poems are analyzed in Practical Criticism by the students.

Summarizing the possibilities of explication for the teaching of English, Richards says:

I am not aware that any work has been done that would test this suggestion. Exercises in

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13I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism.
parsing and paraphrasing are not the kind of analyses I have in view. And I have not heard of any schoolmaster who may have attempted to make a systematic discussion of the forms of meaning and the psychology of understanding part of his teaching.\textsuperscript{14}

In the sense that \textit{Practical Criticism} is a record of student reactions to literature, this present study does not conform with the Richards methods. In the sense that it is a systematic endeavor to read and explicate literature closely, this investigation may be said to be within the general method employed by Richards.

Another early work in the field of explication is William Empson's \textit{Seven Types of Ambiguity},\textsuperscript{15} published in London, 1930. Empson, a pupil of Richards, leans heavily upon psychological analysis of the work of art. \textit{Seven Types of Ambiguity} does not provide the reader with analyses of a large number of literary selections. Empson concerns himself with analyzing selected passages from poetry as a means of applying his critical theory.

Earlier in this chapter (p. 4) the writer mentioned Arms and Kuntz's \textit{Poetry Explication}. The title of this work is somewhat misleading.\textsuperscript{16} Instead of being a

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 333-34.

\textsuperscript{15}William Empson, \textit{Seven Types of Ambiguity}.

\textsuperscript{16}Another title which may be misleading is Edwin Berry Bergum's \textit{The New Criticism}. This work is an anthology of modern aesthetics and literary criticism.
collection of explications, as one might expect from the title, \textit{Poetry Explication} is a check list of articles and books dealing with explications of specific literary works, arranged alphabetically by author. For the teacher of literature, however, \textit{Poetry Explication} is an invaluable source of materials.

In the tradition of the New Criticism, Cleanth Brook's \textit{Modern Poetry and the Tradition}\textsuperscript{17} deserves comment in any summary of the work done in the field of explication. In \textit{Modern Poetry and the Tradition}, Brooks has written a critical analysis of the place, accomplishment, purpose, and merit of several modern poets including Frost, Auden, MacLeish, Eliot, and Yeats. Brooks uses the method of close analysis of text as the basis for his critical commentaries, even though he does not present any systematic series of explications of various types of literature.


\textsuperscript{17}Cleanth Brooks, \textit{Modern Poetry and the Tradition}.

\textsuperscript{18}Cleanth Brooks, \textit{The Well Wrought Urn}.
That this writer has not mentioned the contributions of such critics as Richard P. Blackmur, John Crowe Ransom, T. S. Eliot, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Leonard Unger, Rene Wellek, Austin Warren, and many, many others to the method of explication must not be construed to mean that their significance has been minimized. Rather, it has been the intent of the writer to present a fairly representative list of significant and pioneering authors and their works in the field of explication.

In completing this critical review of work accomplished thus far in the field of explication, two books which have made vital contributions remain to be discussed. It has been the intent of the writer to conclude this summary with a discussion of these two books, since they are the closest in method to that of this study. The first work to be considered is that of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry, an Anthology for College Students.* Understanding Poetry presents for the reader the text of about 230 poems, both English and American. Brooks and Warren have written explications of about forty-eight poems contained in the anthology. Although a controversial work among college teachers of English when it was first published, *Understanding Poetry* now has attained a status that ranks it as a definitive work in the field of

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explication. Universities and colleges have adopted the work as a basic text for undergraduate courses which seek to orient students in mature reading practices. It is the intent of this present study to do for the secondary schools what Understanding Poetry has done for the colleges and universities. Brooks and Warren have chosen at random the poems to be explicated, while in this study the writer has analyzed leading high-school English anthologies for representative literary selections which are presently being read in the secondary schools.

The second book to be considered in detail in this list of critical work done thus far in the field of explication is Wright Thomas and Stuart Gerry Brown's Reading Poems, and Introduction to Critical Study.²⁰ In the preface to Reading Poems, Thomas and Brown acknowledge indebtedness to I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot. From Richard's Practical Criticism the authors of Reading Poems have borrowed the laboratory method of studying literature as though the authors of each selection were anonymous. The method of Reading Poems is inductive, beginning with the text of the selection itself. Reading Poems is arranged in such a way that the student will read relatively simple lyrical poems first and then he will move on to poems of increasing

²⁰Wright Thomas and Stuart Gerry Brown, Reading Poems, an Introduction to Critical Study.
difficulty of comprehension. Texts of 301 poems are printed in the anthology, apart from the explications which are contained in the book. Thomas and Brown have written their explications for the college undergraduate. The present investigation differs from this work, Reading Poems, in the basic intent and purpose of the study—that of accomplishing for high-school English what Understanding Poetry and Reading Poems have done for college English.

From the foregoing list of scholarly studies achieved thus far in the field of explication and this writer's commentaries upon them, it may be discerned that the present study has both similarities and dissimilarities when compared with or contrasted to the body of scholarship cited. In the sense that this study contemplates use of the method of close analysis of text it may be said that similarity exists. In the sense that this investigation limits itself to improving the reading of literature at the high-school level, it may be said that dissimilarity exists. Having completed the above statement upon the purpose and nature of the investigation, one task yet remains for the writer in this first chapter—a preview of the organization of this study.

Preview of organization of this study. In order to provide the reader with a sense of direction, and in order to present an over-all view of the present study, a brief summary statement of each of the chapters to comprise this investigation is presented. It is the belief of this
writer that the method of teaching literature described above is in keeping with the goals of secondary education.

In order to provide documentary evidence of this belief Chapter II of this study will be entitled, "Goals of Secondary Education." While this writer does not envision that he will be able to arrive at any one set of goals acceptable to the diversified points of view which are to be found within the matrix of the American high school, he believes that there are areas of common agreement. Particularly, will it ever remain the major concern of the writer in considering goals for secondary education to examine the method of explication of literature in the light of these goals. If the major premises upon which this study rests—that high schools are not doing an entirely satisfactory job of teaching youth to read, and that traditional methods of teaching reading have not proved entirely satisfactory—are to be demonstrated to be educationally sound, the premises must be proved. "Goals of Secondary Education" will seek to provide a basis for the more detailed and specific application of these goals to be considered in Chapter III.

Chapter III, "Goals of High-School English" will afford the writer opportunity to consider the method of explication as applied to the warp and woof of the larger phases of teaching literature, the goals of secondary-school English as they are generally conceived to be in
the American high school. Particularly, explication will be considered in the fabric of acceptable goals for the high-school English program. An over-all question which will be kept before the reader in Chapter III will be this: Does explication conform to the generally accepted goals for secondary education, and specifically does explication conform to the accepted goals for high-school English?

Chapter IV, "Nature and Status of Reading in High Schools," will provide the writer with the opportunity to look at some documentary evidence which concerns the assumptions upon which this study is predicated: that at present in the American high school there is urgent need for additional experimentation and research as one means of leading youth to more sensitive and insightful reading. Chapter IV should reveal that there is almost unlimited opportunity for teaching improved reading in the secondary school. The method of explication will be considered in relation to the nature and present status of reading in the high schools of America. The first sentence in this present chapter calls attention to the almost overwhelming amount of research which is currently being carried out in the field of reading. In Chapter IV the writer will review the leading research accomplished in the field of reading, seeking to find some over-all synthesis.

Chapter V, "Tools for Explication," will present for the high-school English teacher a brief study in the
sources of information essential to the individual who would become a more skillful and perceptive reader. The listing in this chapter will include such standard tools of literary scholarship as Oxford Companion to English Literature, Oxford Companion to American Literature, Baugh: A Literary History of England, Spiller: Literary History of the United States, and/or similar critical and scholarly tools. One periodical, The Explicator, will be discussed comprehensively. The writer has observed while teaching undergraduates, some of whom were experienced English teachers, that a large proportion of English teachers are unfamiliar with standard scholarly tools. Chapter V, therefore, will provide the interested teacher with a basic list of titles, accompanied with a brief, evaluative commentary upon some of the possibilities of each individual work. Limitations of time and space will not allow an exhaustive listing, nor would such a bibliography be essential here. The purpose of Chapter V is to assist English teachers to become more perceptive readers, not to train them in methods of literary historiography.

Chapter VI, "Explications of Selected Poems," will present examples of explications of poems. As has been stated earlier in this chapter, poems selected for explication are among those found in anthologies which are in current use in English classes in the American high school. As stated earlier, no attempt will be made to attack nor
to justify inclusion of any of the poems. The writer accepts the likelihood that some of these poems are being read by high-school students. Poems explicated will be arranged alphabetically by title.

Chapter VII, "Explications of Selected Prose," will continue the method established in Chapter VI, providing examples of explications of short stories contained in English anthologies currently being used in the nation's high schools. Explications of short stories will represent ones which appear worthy of consideration. For example, simple stories of adventure or action which seem to pose no problems in reading or interpretation will not be considered.

Explications of two dramas will be prepared. They will provide the reader of this study with examples of explications of plays being read at present in secondary-school English classes. Even though drama is generally intended to be a visual art, many avid readers of literature find pleasure in reading plays.

A third type of prose, the novel, will be included in the explications presented in Chapter VII. By the sheer mass of detail presented in the ordinary novel, explication of this literary type presents for this investigator a physical problem of space limitations. In brief, should this writer present several explications of novels in extremely shortened form, or should he present only one or two explications of novels, amplified with full and complete
exegesis? In the hope that both these purposes can be served, the writer will present one explication of a novel in rather complete detail and then offer a shorter explication of another novel currently being read by high-school English students. By presenting one novel in rather complete analysis, the reader of this study may become acquainted with the method of explication and some of the possibilities of the method as an approach to teaching literature. At the same time, readers of the novel may find some additional assistance by reference to the abbreviated explications.

Chapter VIII, "Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations," will provide the writer with opportunity to integrate the lessons learned in the study. The summary statement will rephrase in capsule form the significant findings of the study.

Summary of Chapter I. Although instruction in reading largely has become the responsibility of public education in the United States, the experience of this writer, both as student and as teacher in public schools is such as to indicate that the schools are not doing a wholly satisfactory job of teaching youth to read well. In fact, there is some degree of similarity between the present status of reading in public schools and Prince Hamlet's rejoinder to Polonius when the latter inquired, "What do you read, my
lord?" Hamlet, it will be remembered, replied, "Words, words, words."

The present study is the result of this writer's feelings of inadequacy as a beginning high-school teacher of English when he attempted to share the experiences recorded by writers with a group of adolescents. The present investigation is undertaken in the expressed hope that the findings of the study may result in improved reading instruction in the secondary schools. Traditional literary instruction, leaning heavily upon a study of facts about literature with too little attention being paid to a close reading of the text, has been judged by the writer as contributing to reading ineffectiveness rather than contributing to reading effectiveness.

Inherent to this study are the terms, explication and the New Criticism. Explication, derived from the Latin explicatus, is literally an unfolding. Actually, the method of explication can be traced to Longinus (A.D. ca. 213-273), the Greek rhetorician and philosophical critic. The present study is closely akin to the method of the New Criticism in the sense that both this investigation and the New Criticism place heavy emphasis upon a close reading and interpretation of the literary composition.

In Chapter I, the writer has pointed out that explications of various literary types will comprise a major portion of the study. The writer will have analyzed six series of
high-school English anthologies in order to compile a representative list of literary selections currently being read in American secondary schools.

In a preview of the organization of the study the writer has pointed out that Chapters I through V are to be devoted to establishing the method of literary explication within the matrix of the present secondary-school English program. Chapters VI and VII will present examples of explications, arranged according to literary type. Chapter VII will be comprised of a summary.

Attention of the reader is now directed to a consideration of the goals for secondary education, the basic problem to be studied in Chapter II of this investigation.
CHAPTER II

GOALS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Social historians of the future who seek to interpret the growth and development of American civilization will do well to give particular attention to the American secondary school. In the development of this unique educational institution, the historian will see mirrored the three-hundred years' story of American culture. A more than cursory examination of American secondary education inevitably will reveal not only that the American high school has held up a mirror to the culture of this nation, but it also has made and is making significant contributions to American civilization. Nor is the end of the role of secondary education, both as reflecting and as shaping agent, yet in view. As this writer has pointed out in Chapter I, an increasingly complex, technological civilization places new and urgent demands upon the secondary school as an agency of democracy.

If it is true that the role of the secondary school is to become increasingly vital to the welfare of American civilization, what goals, what patterns, shall best serve the schools and thus the nation? What ideals shall the
schools seek to transmit? What way of life shall be held up as worthy for all students to emulate? What values and ideals provide the citizens of a democracy with worthwhile outlooks, patterns, mores, and customs? To find answers to these questions, to arrive at a broader, clearer, more sharply defined understanding of some of the forces influencing secondary education and to seek and to formulate some acceptable goals for the American high school are the major purposes of this chapter.

Present high schools are dissimilar. So manifold and so varied are the American concepts of the good life, so diverse and complex are the needs of a free, independent people that no single, all-inclusive set of goals may be spelled out in specific terms which may be applicable to the wide range of types and kinds of contemporary American high schools. These schools range in concept and purpose from the cosmopolitan high school to the rural high school; from the college-preparatory high school to the vocational school; and from the traditional, subject-centered high school to the experimental, adolescent-needs school. For each of the widely differing schools, whether or not formally stated, there is a philosophy of education which may be regarded as the basis of its goals, methods, and curriculum. This writer proposes to examine some of the variant philosophies as objectively as possible and to
derive from them some of the educational objectives which seem inherent in each. The writer then proposes to make a brief analysis of the nature of a democratic culture since an ideal secondary school would, presumably, seek to reflect the values and ideals held by the citizens of a democracy. Since numerous, authoritative sets of goals for secondary education have been proposed from time to time in the past, the writer proposes to examine some representative lists of goals for the American high school. It is the supposition of this writer that some of these goals are so desirable as to merit inclusion in any new set of objectives for American secondary education. From these three sources then—the variant philosophies of education, the nature of a democratic culture, and authoritative statements of goals—this writer proposes to arrive at a set of objectives for the American high school. Having arrived at a set of goals, the writer will then defend these goals in the light of his previous analysis of the three sources for objectives of the secondary schools. With this plan in mind, the writer now turns to a consideration of some of the various educational philosophies.

Diversity exists among philosophies of education. Even the most superficial examination of various educational philosophies reveals numerous divergences and conflicts. While this writer is not inclined to look upon such conflict
as necessarily and of itself a negative influence upon secondary education in the United States, he finds that the problems of reaching some commonly agreed-upon goals for the schools are made decidedly complex by the existence of these great differences among philosophies of education. For example, so far as this writer knows, no one list of descriptive titles for the various educational philosophies is universally accepted.

According to Reisner there are five "world frames" or philosophies of education:

(1) the Aristotelian, (2) the Thomistic, (3) the modern or absolute idealistic, (4) the realist, and (5) the pragmatic, or instrumentalist.¹

Justman suggests for titles of the various philosophies of education: humanism, social evolutionism, social realism, and experimentalism.² Another way to name educational philosophies suggested by Brubacher is to classify them as pragmatism, romantic naturalism, idealism, naturalistic realism, rational humanism, and Catholic supernaturalism.³


²Joseph Justman, Theories of Secondary Education in the United States, pp. 12-54.

In order to establish a common point of reference in the present discussion concerning philosophies of secondary education and their implications for the goals of the secondary school, this writer will arbitrarily choose to employ the nomenclature suggested by Reisner for the various philosophies of education listed just above. Moreover, because of the common elements found in idealism and Aristotelianism, this writer will consider the two philosophies under the heading of idealism. In like manner, the writer proposes to summarize the philosophy of reconstructionism and its objectives under the heading of instrumentalism as defined by Reisner. That common elements do in fact exist between idealism and Aristotelianism, the writer will seek to demonstrate.

The philosophy of idealism. Modern educational philosophies are indebted to classical Greece for the basic concepts found in idealism and Aristotelianism. In the debates and essays attributed to Aristotle and Plato are found the basic ideas of man as a duality, a being with body and soul (or mind). Idealism assumes that there are immutable and finite truths which are primordial. In the world of the idealist there is a fixed moral order.

One area of similarity between the idealist and the Aristotelian is expressed by Horne, an idealist, in the National Society for the Study of Education, Forty-First Yearbook, wherein it is found that he says, "Aristotle,
the logician, was a pupil of Plato. He learned from Plato the art of dialectics and from Socrates, through Plato, the art of definition and of forming concepts.\textsuperscript{4} Horne says that Aristotle was generally regarded until the seventeenth century as the author and finisher of the faith of the idealist. He points out that the Socratic method of teaching, based upon inductive reasoning, is used by the idealist and the Aristotelian alike.

What are the educational implications of idealism as an educational philosophy? In general, it may be said that idealism implies the subject-centered approach to curriculum construction, to classroom method, to the content of courses, and to the goals of the schools themselves. Since there are immutable truths to be understood and acted upon by the student, the emphasis in the idealistic philosophy of education is upon subject matter. Yet, as Horne points out, the student is not forgotten; his personal growth and personality development are matters of prime concern. As to the place of the student in the idealistic school, Horne believes that

\begin{quote}
...our philosophy dares to suggest that the learner is a finite person, growing when properly educated, into the image of an infinite person, that his real origin is deity, that his nature is freedom, and that his destiny is immortality.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[4]{NSSE, op. cit., p. 166.}
\footnotetext[5]{Ibid., p. 155.}
\end{footnotes}
Such a view of the place of the student in the educational system does not overlook nor minimize the possibility that students are often ignorant, negligent, crude, willful, perverse, and enslaved by faulty, unsatisfactory habits. Man, accordingly, is capable of both good and evil. He is challenged by his aspiration toward the ideal, toward the perfect.

Critics of the idealistic position allege that schools which adhere to idealism as an educational philosophy tend to emphasize past events unduly. Brubacher partially accounts for such concern for the past by saying that,

> Here ideas are of ultimate, cosmic significance....Ideas are rather the essences of archetypes which give form to the cosmos....But more important for the educational philosophy of essentialism is the fact that these ideas or forms are eternal, unchanging.⁶

Proceeding upon the assumption that ideas are archetypal, the idealist then must seek to understand the source of the ideas, ideals, and values which he uses in his daily life. Thus, he must study the past. Otherwise, the idealist would ask, By what set of values, by what standards can he judge whether or not an idea, a practice, a pattern is satisfactory or faulty?

Robert Maynard Hutchins, former Chancellor of the University of Chicago, and an acknowledged spokesman for the Aristotelian position, lends support to Brubacher's

⁶Brubacher, op. cit., p. 310.
contention that schools must provide the student with a sense of the past when he declares:

Since the content of liberal education is the greatest ideas that the greatest men have had, regardless of the time at which they lived or the kind of society they lived in, and since the methods of history, philosophy, and language as well as of science, liberal education can hardly arise in the face of pragmatism, positivism, or Marxism.⁷

To Hutchins, liberal education implies knowledge of the past, an understanding of philosophy, familiarity with the great works of literature, and skill in the command of language.

For the idealist, the personality of the student is of major significance. To Horne, as was stated above, "personality has ultimate worth."⁸ Thus, self-fulfillment and self-realization for the student are ultimate and imperative goals for the idealist. On this ground, then, it would seem that Horne would hold that the role of the school is that of helping the individual to arrive at some workable relationship between the individual will and the will of society. Having great respect for the personalities of the students, the teacher in the idealistic school would help the students to search for final answers. He would not supply them.

Curriculum development in the school of the idealist includes three considerations, according to Horne: the sciences, the fine arts, and the practical arts.⁹

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⁹Ibid., p. 161.
teaches man to know the natural laws. The study of fine arts provides man with the means of expressing aesthetic sensibilities. Study of the practical arts provides knowledge of agriculture, lumbering, trades, industry, and innumerable other vocational activities. The idealist operates upon the assumption that modern man can benefit from the lessons of the past. It is the role of the school to transmit and to make workable those lessons for today's adolescents. Even if given the advantages of a thorough understanding of history, today's adolescent will still encounter numerous dilemmas throughout his lifetime.

In summarizing the idealistic and Aristotelian philosophies of education, what goals for secondary education are implied within these bodies of educational thought? Schools that reflect the idealistic philosophy of education are subject-centered; they seek to transmit cultural traditions; they assume that man is a duality, and therefore the schools must seek to develop man's spiritual nature; they must strive to base instruction upon inductive reasoning; they seek a balance between individual and group will; and they should attempt to provide a balanced curriculum, stressing equally the humanities, the sciences, the fine and applied arts.

The Thomistic philosophy. The Thomistic philosophy of education is based upon the belief that one God rules the universe, that the will of this God has been made known
through supernatural revelation. Since God's will, to the Thomist, is unquestionable, and since the parochial school serves as an official agency of the church, the teacher has divine authority for what he chooses to teach, provided that what he chooses to teach is regarded by the church as orthodox. The primacy of the God concept to the Thomistic educational philosophy is stated by William McGucken, S.J., when he observes that, "Scholastic philosophy is theocentric. Catholic life and education have God as their basis."\(^{10}\)

McGucken explains further that God as the cornerstone of scholasticism "is apt to prove irritating to the modern secularist who either ignores God or relegates Him to lower case."\(^{11}\) To the Thomist, man is made up of body and soul, the soul being spiritual, intrinsically independent of matter. To the Catholic, God created the soul of man and only God can destroy the soul. McGucken succinctly states that the objective of Catholic education is that of helping man to know, to love, and to understand the will of God. For, as McGucken says, "Without God, the Catholic maintains there is no ultimate purpose in life, no ultimate purpose in education."\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\) NSSE, op. cit., p. 252.  
\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 252.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 252.
How does the Thomist define education? In a Papal Encyclical, issued December 31, 1929, Pope Pius XI defined education as follows:

...Since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end...and there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.13

Clearly then, the Thomistic school must provide religious instruction, Catholic instruction. In his "Encyclical on Christian Education," Pope Pius XI decrees that the "proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by baptism."14

In the Thomistic school what else, in addition to religious principles, shall be taught? McGucken states that the objectives of the American Catholic secondary school shall fit the pupil to be

a) an intelligent human being, according to his capabilities;

b) an intelligent, practical Catholic, with all that these terms connote;


14NSSE, op. cit., p. 265.
c) an intelligent, good American citizen;

d) an intelligent, helpful member of society and of these three particular groups of which he is or will be a member—the family, professions, vocations, etc.15

Apparently then, the Thomistic school will stress moral and Christian teaching, the dogma of the church, character building, and intellectual development. The Thomist assumes that God has revealed the truth and it remains only for man to obey and to be guided by the truth. In principle, the Thomistic educational philosophy is authoritarian, since there is little point in contesting the truth as revealed by God. The Thomistic school fosters Western traditions; it stresses citizenship training; it is concerned with aesthetic experience; it strives to teach the lessons of the past; it teaches the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It would seem that the authoritarian attitude of the Thomistic school toward individualism would encourage conformity.

The philosophy of Realism or Naturalism. In his work, Modern Philosophies of Education, John S. Brubacher makes the observation that "the most general theoretical statement of the naturalistic or scientific realist position is that of F. S. Breed, Education and the New Realism."16

15Ibid., p. 268.  
16Brubacher, op. cit., p. 314.
Further evidence that Breed is regarded by educational philosophers as a spokesman for the philosophy of realism is seen in the fact that this philosopher was selected by the National Society for the Study of Education to write the chapter in its *Forty-First Yearbook, Philosophies of Education*, that deals with realism.

First, and perhaps foremost for the realist, complete reliance is placed upon science, and striving to understand physical laws. Concerning the realist's faith in science, Breed says that

> Man pursues his welfare; science is designed to guide his way. Science tells him in advance of personal experience, for example, that an antitoxin will be found more "attractive" as a remedy for diphtheria than a sodium chloride solution.¹⁷

For Breed, nothing is exempt in the drive for scientific knowledge. Objects and their relations, man and his reactions, all come within the "comprehensive" grasp of science. Breed says that "educational objectives are determined by scientific investigation."¹⁸ He believes that the school program must be built upon the method of investigation. Schools must assume the obligation of acquainting the student with the physical laws of the universe. Such a process of instruction Breed terms "...the acquisition of subject matter, the formation

¹⁸Ibid., op. 19-20.
of concepts, the development of general and abstract ideas."19 The realist, according to Breed, has great respect for the laws of science, accepting the idea that these laws rest upon unvarying and inexorable laws of nature and not merely upon human behavior. To the realist, intellectual discipline is necessary, inasmuch as the laws of nature are exact and fixed. Only a disciplined mind can understand the laws of the universe.

What kind of classroom activities shall the realistic school provide for its students? Breed declares that, "properly selected problems and projects will have a place in mediating between the child's present experience and the more mature experience represented in the generalizations of the subject."20 In the light of this statement, the school must provide exploratory experiences for the student that will enable him to understand the world in which he lives. If adequate experiences are provided by the school, the child will learn to live in harmony with the world of reality, since he will understand the laws of the universe. The curriculum in the realistic school is to be based upon the best data on reality that is available at a given time. The realist rejects the theory that the child has a psyche, a supernature, a soul. For the realist, learning is largely a stimulus-response process. Thus,

19Ibid., p. 62. 20Ibid., p. 218.
the realist places much emphasis upon mechanical measurement of achievement and learning. Similarly, the realist is willing to place emphasis upon a scientific determination of educational values.

Contrary to the belief held by the idealist that moral laws are archetypal, springing from primordial times, the realist emphasizes the here and now. His concept of the universe is that of a space-time relationship. With his present knowledge and instruments, the realist does not seek to deal with miracle, the supernatural, the divine. While not categorically rejecting the idea of God, the realist simply makes no endeavor to deal with the concept, because he feels he lacks the means to deal with the idea. For the realist, morals spring from folkways and they have no divine sanction.

Realism, insofar as it deals with segments of human experience, seeks to transmit the record of the past. The realist stresses the Greek concern for freeing human intelligence; he includes in his school instruction in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic; he provides both for avocational and vocational training; he also seeks to provide for individual differences.

The philosophy of instrumentalism. Any serious consideration of the educational philosophy of pragmatism, or instrumentalism, must take into cognizance the work and
contributions of the late John Dewey. It would seem no exaggeration to say that John Dewey has had more impact upon American education than any other man living in the twentieth century. Probably, too, no other educational philosopher of the twentieth century has been at the center of controversy more often than has John Dewey. What were Dewey's basic ideas? What were the implications of these ideas for the objectives of secondary education? It is to seek answers for these questions that the investigator now turns.

In one of his earliest works, The School and Society, Dewey refers to a "transformation" which he saw taking place in American social life at the time, 1899-1900. His declaration concerning the changes which he saw taking place set the stage for much of his later theorizing. Dewey observed that--

If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation. This transformation is not something to appear suddenly, to be executed in a day by conscious purpose. It is already in progress.21

It was Dewey's faith that, since society was always in flux, the schools should likewise be in process of change in order to reflect the zeitgeist which the school served. It was

also in this pioneering work in educational philosophy that Dewey gave voice to his faith in the "activity school." He disliked the desks that he found in the elementary schools of the period, complaining that they were suitable only for "listening." In such an organized, regimented, and immobile classroom as Dewey observed, he found little opportunity for adjustment of the pupils to life as he saw it. Dewey referred to the traditional school as the "old education," disapproving of its "passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method." Dewey felt that the emphasis in the schools of the day was faulty. He contended that the teacher and the textbook were the "center of gravity," and both of these were outside the child's interests and activities. Dewey sensed that a revolution in the schools already was underway, that the child was becoming the "center of gravity," that in the future the child would become the "sun" around which the "planets" of the teacher and the textbook would revolve.

In his work, **Democracy and Education**, Dewey says of education, "It is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of the experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience."23

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23 John Dewey, **Democracy and Education**, pp. 89-90.
For Dewey, then, education consists of reconstructing or reorganizing experience. He places complete faith in scientific experimentation with the exercise of intelligence as the only means of arriving at the truth. To Dewey there are no immutable truths. The only guide that the individual needs is an intelligence that is as free of bias and ignorance as is humanly possible. Freedom for the child in selecting those experiences that fall within the range of his personal interests is one of the hallmarks of the Deweyan school. Children are encouraged to participate in various individual and group activities in the classroom. Rather than to study a civics text about city government, children in the Deweyan school would probably make a first-hand study of the local city government, or they might organize a city council, elect a mayor, and in their own way proceed to conduct the business of the city.

Among the aims of education set forth by Dewey in *Democracy and Education* are these: social efficiency, industrial competency, personal culture, complete living, social service, regard for individual differences, and good citizenship. These objectives for education, according to Dewey, may best be achieved through the intelligent selection and solution of problems that interest the child at a given time. Dewey rejects the traditional means of

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achieving goals for education which are what he terms teacher-centered and textbook dominated, preferring instead the problem-solving method of classroom procedure. To the instrumentalist, thinking occurs only when a problem exists, when a choice is to be made, or when the individual is puzzled. Another factor in instrumentalism that largely influences both objectives and method is the Deweyan faith that there are no eternal verities and that man is not a dualistic being. To Dewey then, mind is a function of the human organism, possessing nothing of what the idealists call divine or immortal.

William Heard Kilpatrick, another major spokesman for the philosophy of instrumentalism, holds that thinking, and accordingly education, is for behavior, for active service in individual and social life, and not, as formerly conceived, "primarily for refined and abstracted enjoyment; that intelligence put to use is man's chief reliance for meeting life's problems."25 To Kilpatrick, as to Dewey, the school must be a place where children "live" what they need to know. On this point Kilpatrick says that

...this means that the school must be a place of living what is to be learned; for each one learns what he really and truly lives. In one

word, our philosophy of education will turn out to be the correlative of our philosophy of life.26

Kilpatrick contends that one of the reasons why the contemporary high school has failed to achieve what he calls "a place of living," is the impact of liberal-arts colleges upon high-school teachers. Teachers who are taught, while yet in college, that "education consists in learning subjects," will fail to stress character building and personality development as the "dominant aim of education,"27 according to Kilpatrick.

What objectives for secondary education seem to be derivable from instrumentalism? First and perhaps most significantly, the instrumentalist seeks to use the scientific method and the experimental attitude in the search for truth. He stresses the use of intelligence as the means by which men can solve their problems. He believes that children learn through doing and seeks to provide opportunities for individual and group learning activities. He believes that the school should provide opportunities for developing social efficiency, industrial competency, personal culture, social service, and good citizenship.

26Ibid., p. 221.
27Ibid., p. 233.
The philosophy of reconstructionism. Although Reisner does not include the philosophy of reconstructionism in his set of terms describing various philosophies of education, and even though reconstructionism is an offshoot or outgrowth of Deweyan instrumentalism, the writer proposes to give a separate treatment to reconstructionism. The reasons for this procedure are many. Although it is chronologically the youngest of the various philosophies treated in this discourse, reconstructionism, so it would seem at present, is likely to become the rallying point for liberal and conservative, between traditional and progressive outlooks upon educational philosophy. The mood of the philosophy of reconstructionism is struck by Theodore Brameld in the first sentence of his book, *Ends and Means in Education: A Midcentury Appraisal*, when he says, "American and world education requires a reconstructed outlook." According to Brameld, reconstructionism

...would attempt to build the widest possible consensus about the supreme aims which should govern mankind in the reconstruction of world culture. These aims can be delineated through cooperative search: indeed, the reconstructionist is convinced that already there is a growing consensus or agreement about their most basic characteristics.29


29Ibid., p. 15.
Brameld believes that the world of the future should be one in which the "common man" rules not merely in principle but in fact. Brameld believes that the world of the future toward which education should strive would be one in which the technological potentialities already clearly discernible are released for the creation of health, abundance, security for the great masses of every color, every nationality. This world of the future which Brameld envisions is one in which national sovereignty is "utterly subordinated to international authority."30

Brameld asserts that reconstructionism is by no means "a finished philosophy." He sees no reason why the reconstructionist should repudiate "the constructive achievements" of progressivism. At the same time, Brameld declares that his philosophy is committed to "the renascence of modern culture." Brameld rejects the notion that the schools should remain impartial concerning controversial social and political issues. Education, he says, should commit itself to research, to diffusion of knowledge, in order to make it possible for young people to know beauty, goodness, and truth.

30 Ibid., p. 15.
In a recent work, *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective*, Brameld establishes "Six Generalizations" concerning the progressivist psychological viewpoint:

1. This psychology definitely and consistently applies to the underlying pragmatic philosophy.

2. As a direct inference from our first generalization, learning itself is a natural experience.

3. Such a view of learning means that the "whole child" is necessarily involved in learning, not only in his mind.

4. The child's surroundings are as fundamental to his nature as is his own body, which, in a way, is also part of his surroundings.

5. Learning functions on rising levels of complexity, the highest of which is intelligence.

6. Progressivism rejects several concepts concerning the nature of the child that are still held by widely influential traditional psychologies.

Brameld assumes that education is social in origin and social in nature. He would base instruction upon social, psychological, emotional, aesthetic, political, and economic needs.

Educational objectives derivable from various philosophies. Upon considering the idealistic philosophy of education the writer found that American secondary
school should provide instruction in subject matter. Schools have the responsibility of transmitting the cultural heritage. There should be moral guidance and opportunity for character development; vocational training is necessary; Personality development should be provided for; and respect for individual differences should be encouraged. Schools should foster a questioning attitude on the part of students. Schools are obligated to provide common understandings, a common core of learning, including the fundamentals of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In his examination of Thomistic educational philosophy, this investigator has shown that the school would take an authoritarian attitude toward learning activities. Schools would provide instruction in subject-matter areas, moral and spiritual guidance, character building, and a certain amount of vocational instruction.

Emphases found in the realist's philosophy of education include such aspects of education as subject-matter instruction, stress upon mastery of details, opportunity for open and free inquiry, and skill in scientific research.

From Deweyan instrumentalism and reconstructionism the writer found such educational objectives as skillful use of the experimental, scientific attitude toward discovery of the truth, development of social, personal, and
vocational competencies, and training for good citizenship. Schools should provide opportunity for learning by doing. Both individual and group activities should be provided.

Typical goals for secondary education proposed in the past. In the history of American secondary education there has long been vigorous and controversial discussion of the goals toward which the schools should direct their efforts. Because of the continuing validity of many of the goals proposed in the past, the writer now proposes to inspect various of the more widely known lists of objectives, hoping that in doing so he may be aided in establishing his own set of goals.

During the 1890's the National Education Association fostered discussion of the goals of secondary schools. As a result of the work of the Committee of Ten on Secondary Studies, a significant statement of purpose, including the assertion that preparation for college is not the major function of the secondary schools, was formulated. Of all the lists of goals for secondary education, possibly none has had more influence than the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, formulated by the

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Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1918. The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education are as follows:

1. Health
2. Command of the fundamental processes
3. Worthy home membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure time
7. Ethical character

Contained in the Principles are goals which include the development of good habits of health, instruction in the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, citizenship training, vocational and avocational instruction. This investigator believes that many of the objectives found in the Cardinal Principles provide a generally acceptable pattern for the American high school. While it is true that such objectives as transmitting the cultural heritage and provision for self-realization and self-fulfillment are not specifically called for in the list of principles, they are implied in citizenship, worthy home membership, vocational guidance, ethical character, and worthy use of leisure time.

In the spring of 1944, the Educational Policies Commission issued a set of goals for secondary schools in

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a report entitled, *Education for All American Youth*. In this report the Commission listed the "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth." According to the Commission, the "Needs" were arrived at through a study of society, both locally and nationally, and by an analysis of the day-to-day lives of boys and girls of various ages. The ten "Needs" follow:

1. All youth need to develop salable skills and those understandings and attitudes that make the worker an intelligent and productive participant in economic life. To this end, most youth need supervised work experience as well as education in the skills and knowledge of their occupations.

2. All youth need to develop and maintain good health and physical fitness.

3. All youth need to understand the rights and duties of the citizen of a democratic society, and to be diligent and competent in the performance of their obligations as members of the community and citizens of the state and nation.

4. All youth need to understand the significance of the family for the individual and society and the conditions conducive to successful family life.

5. All youth need to know how to purchase and use goods and services intelligently, understanding both the values received by the consumer and the economic consequences of their acts.

6. All youth need to understand the methods of science, the influence of science on human life, and the main scientific facts concerning the nature of the world and of man.

7. All youth need opportunities to develop their capacities to appreciate beauty in literature, art, music, and nature.
8. All youth need to be able to use their leisure time well and to budget it wisely, balancing activities that yield satisfaction to the individual with those that are socially useful.

9. All youth need to develop respect for other persons, to grow in their insight into ethical values and principles, and to be able to live and work cooperatively with others.

10. All youth need to grow in their ability to think rationally, to express their thoughts clearly, and to read and listen with understanding.  

The ten "Imperative Needs" quoted above constitute a thorough and comprehensive list of educational objectives. In such recommendations made by the Commission as vocational training, good health, good citizenship, appreciation of beauty, and understanding the significance of family life, there is the spirit of the Cardinal Principles. The Commission has, in most instances, indicated the how and the why of its educational aims. While the Commission surely implies that the schools should seek to transmit the cultural heritage, it does not make any specific recommendations concerning this obligation.

In a publication prepared by the faculty of the University School at the Ohio State University, entitled, The Philosophy and Purposes of the University School, the purposes of the school are defined as being consistent

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with a democratic philosophy. To the staff at University School democracy means respect for the uniqueness of human personality; faith in the method of intelligence in all areas of living; and faith in living and working together for the common good. In order to create a living and learning situation which will provide for the optimum development of the individual and the group in a democratic environment, the faculty at University School suggests seven "Continuous Curriculum Experiences Directly Related to Democratic Values" that may be regarded as a list of objectives for the laboratory school. These "Continuous Curriculum Experiences" are those of--

1. Developing social sensitivity
2. Developing co-operativeness
3. Developing the ability and zeal to utilize the method of intelligence in solving all problems of human concern
4. Developing creativeness
5. Developing skills in democratic living
6. Interpreting democracy
7. Developing self-direction.35

The faculty at University School is concerned with skills of communication and the development of aesthetic sensibilities. To this writer the development of skills in use of the method of intelligence implies mastery of the

35The faculty of The Ohio State University School, The Philosophy and Purposes of The University School, pp. 9-10.
skills of reading, writing, and listening. These skills are the instruments through which intelligence operates.

Thus far in this chapter this writer has concerned himself with an analysis of the various educational philosophies and an examination of some representative lists of objectives of secondary education that have been proposed from time to time. In the process, this writer has been seeking aims for secondary education that may be implicit in the philosophies and in the lists of goals. Numerous goals for the high schools have been stated as acceptable to this writer. One further task remains to be accomplished before the writer can consider that he is ready to propose a set of objectives for the American high school. In the introductory paragraphs of Chapter II, the writer suggests that he would attempt a concise statement of what seems to him to be some worthwhile and acceptable ideals, values, and standards which operate in a democracy and which the schools properly should seek to foster and inculcate. The writer assumes that schools in a democracy should seek to accomplish those ends or goals that seem best to reflect the way of life in that democracy.

Democratic values, what are they? If the American secondary school is to inculcate and to foster the spirit of American democratic values, what are these values and how can they be identified? One answer to this question
is provided by Harold Alberty in his book, *Reorganizing the High-School Curriculum*, in a topic entitled, "The Meaning of Democracy," in which Professor Alberty says that "democracy is not merely a form of government but a way of living together in a highly complex society which is undergoing rapid change." Alberty takes the position that one of the attributes of democracy is change and the consequent need for constant reinterpretation of social and economic institutions, of moral and ethical values. However, Alberty believes that, although disagreement as to what comprises the good life in a democracy is one of its characteristics, there are some areas where common agreements do exist. For example, Alberty asserts that as a people, Americans generally agree upon "the optimal development of human personality" as one of the values held in a democracy.

To Alberty, "democracy may be interpreted to embrace three interrelated ideals":

1. It is a form of social organization that holds that the optimal development of the individual—of all individuals, is the highest good.

2. The optimal development of all can be realized only to the extent that people have faith in intelligence as a method of solving individual and group problems.

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3. Man can achieve his highest possible development only through acting in concert with his fellows, each individual sensitive to the effects of his acts upon others.\textsuperscript{37}

These interrelated democratic ideals hold strong implications for American secondary education. As Alberty points out, one such major purpose of the high school is to provide equal educational opportunities for all youth, regardless of intelligence, socioeconomic status, race, nationality, or creed. In such a school the curriculum would be based upon "the common and specialized needs, problems, and interests of the student."\textsuperscript{38}

A very recent study by Will French and Associates, \textit{Behavioral Goals of General Education in High School}, defines the democratic values which schools should seek to foster in terms of certain behavioral outcomes on the part of students. Since this book is based upon the findings of a survey, the questionnaire used by the authors is central to the behavioral patterns expected of the graduates of the high schools. Three major questions asked in the survey follow:

Do schools help students in--

1. Growing toward self-realization?
2. Growing in ability to maintain desirable small (face-to-face) group relationships?

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 39. \textsuperscript{38}Ibid., pp. 45-49.
3. Growing in ability to maintain the relationships imposed by membership in large organizations?  

Under the first category, "Do schools help the student in growing toward self-realization," the questionnaire suggests that such goals as improving study habits, improving ability to communicate ideas, becoming competent in use of logical thinking, and revealing the personal understandings and characteristics of the good citizen, among others, are desirable aims for the American secondary school. These are some of the ideals of a democracy which desirably should be fostered by the schools.

In the present chapter the writer has attempted to examine various philosophies of education as objectively as possible, deriving from each philosophy what seemed to him to be the goals for secondary education that were implicit within those philosophies. The writer then inspected representative and authoritative lists of objectives for secondary schools, attempting to derive from them goals that seemed to be usable in the contemporary American high school. Finally, the writer has attempted to establish at least some of the values that describe and identify the democratic state and the democratic way of life. In attempting to establish democratic values, the

writer has referred to two very recent works in the field of secondary education. In identifying some democratic ideals and values, the writer found that certain goals for secondary education were implicit within these ideals and values.

The writer now proposes to formulate his own goals for secondary education. In consideration of the vast scope and the many types of American secondary schools, and in consideration of the conflicting philosophies of education which establish patterns for the schools, the writer does not believe that his list of goals for secondary education will satisfy everyone. He can only ask that his reader consider this list of objectives for secondary education in the light in which it is prepared, concern for the improvement of American secondary schools as they exist today. Whatever gains that the schools may make in the future will occur in an atmosphere of open and free discussion. The writer assumes that each generation can benefit by re-evaluating and re-assessing the findings and postulates of preceding generations.

Goals for American secondary education. The schools should seek--

1. To continue the common core of learning that was begun in the elementary school.

2. To foster democratic values, ideals, attitudes, and conduct, and to regard effective citizenship as the goal for all educational activity.
3. To provide adolescents with an understanding of the physical world, and to acquaint them with the physical laws of the universe.

4. To encourage adolescents to develop their desirable and socially acceptable individual differences as a means of achieving self-fulfillment and self-realization.

5. To provide moral and ethical instruction.

6. To transmit the cultural heritage.

7. To develop cultural, social, and aesthetic sensibilities, and to provide wholesome recreational activities.

8. To provide the beginning of vocational training for all those who seek or need it.

9. To promote the ability to think logically and to foster the spirit of and respect for learning.

Do the nine goals for secondary education proposed by the writer reflect goals that were implicit in the educational philosophies, in the lists of authoritative objectives, and in the democratic ideals and values considered earlier in this chapter?

First of the goals, secondary schools should continue the common core of learning begun in the elementary schools, requires that the American high school provide instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics. In the philosophy of idealism the writer found that stress is placed upon instruction in subject matter. Command of the language, written or spoken, and ability to read with sensitivity seem to be indispensable accomplishments in the mastery of subject matter. The philosophy of Thomism,
with its emphasis upon subject matter, lends support to instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics. McGucken, it will be remembered, states that one objective of the secondary school is that of helping the student to become "an intelligent, good citizen." To this writer, ability to read and write is essential to good citizenship. Breed, the realist, lays stress upon teaching fundamental skills in order that the student may benefit from the accumulated store of scientific knowledge. For Dewey, the student cannot exercise his intelligence that is free of bias and ignorance without mastery of the skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. According to the reconstructionist, who would enlarge the role of the common man in determining his own destiny, reading, writing, and mathematics seem to be indispensable. The seven Cardinal Principles, the "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth," and the eight "Continuous Curriculum Experiences" of The Ohio State University School all call, either directly or indirectly, for mastery of basic communicative skills by the high-school student. Alberty's assertion that democracy implies "the optimal development of human personality cannot occur in a society of illiterates. For Will French and Associates, one democratic value that should be reflected in educational objectives is that of assisting the student to achieve self-fulfillment and self-realization. To this
The second goal proposed by this writer, schools should foster democratic ideals and good citizenship, is similar to point five, "Citizenship," of the seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. Educational philosophies examined in this chapter either directly or indirectly imply that schools should foster democratic ideals and good citizenship. While there are wide differences among the various philosophies and their basic tenets, there are also areas of agreement. Although the philosophies may have irreconcilable differences as to how basic ideals for a democracy may best be achieved, it seems to this writer that all of the educational philosophies assume that the schools have an obligation to foster both democratic ideals and good citizenship. Point three of the ten "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth" obligates the schools to help the student "to understand the rights and duties of the citizen of a democratic society." The Ohio State University School defines its purposes as being "consistent with a democratic philosophy." The school founds its objectives upon the faith that students benefit from living and working together for the common good.

The third of the goals, secondary schools should provide youth with an understanding of the physical world and with knowledge of the physical laws, is derived from
the idealistic, Thomistic, and realistic philosophies that stress subject matter among their objectives for secondary schools. For the instrumentalist and the reconstructionist, skillful use of the experimental, scientific attitude toward discovery of the truth is paramount. To this writer, complete understanding of the method of science includes a working knowledge of the physical world and the physical laws of the universe. Point six of the "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth" requires that all youth know the method of science and the "main scientific facts concerning the nature of the world and of man."

The fourth of the goals, individual differences on the part of students should be developed as a means of helping youth to achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment, is akin to the position taken by Horne, the idealist. To Horne, "personality has ultimate worth." Thus, as has been pointed out by this writer, self-fulfillment and self-realization are ultimate and imperative goals for the school. Similarly, the instrumentalist and the reconstructionist advocate development of individual differences in their stress upon an achieved balance between individual and group activities and relationships. Development of the "whole child" implies to this writer some stress upon individual differences.

The fifth of the goals, schools should provide moral and ethical instruction, reflects the idealistic and
Thomistic assumptions that truth is final, absolute, and everywhere the same. Both philosophies assume that schools are obliged to provide students with a sense of the past. To this writer, one aspect of study of the past is that of inquiry into moral and ethics. The instrumentalist is concerned with such goals for the schools as social efficiency, complete living, social service, and good citizenship. In the opinion of this writer, these ideas are all moral and ethical in nature. Point seven of the Cardinal Principles specifically calls for "ethical character," as one of the aims for secondary schools.

The sixth of the goals, schools should transmit the cultural heritage, is derived from the belief expressed by Brubacher that "Ideas are rather the essences of archetypes which give form to the cosmos...." To understand the source of ideas, ideals, and values, the student, according to Brubacher, must study the past. To Hutchins, education "is the greatest ideas that the greatest men have had." In order for the student to benefit from the greatest ideas of the greatest men, the schools must acquaint him with these thoughts. Since Thomism is based upon faith in supernatural revelation of truth, and since the Bible and the writings of the saints contain the records of these revelations, it would seem to this writer that the Thomistic school would have to transmit the record of the past generations to the present.
The seventh of the goals, schools should help students develop cultural, social, and aesthetic sensibilities, and should provide wholesome recreational activities, is based, in part, upon Horne's belief that one consideration in curriculum building is that of fine arts. Study of the fine arts is one means of developing cultural and aesthetic sensibilities. For the Thomist, schools should offer religious instruction. Since costuming and ritual are significant aspects of church ceremony, religious instruction, in the opinion of this writer, includes aesthetic development. In his pioneering work, Democracy and Education, Dewey specifically mentions social efficiency and personal culture as being two objectives for education. The Cardinal Principles includes worthy use of leisure time and good health as objectives of the schools. First of Alberty's "three interrelated ideals of democracy" suggests the optimal development of the individual as the highest good. To this writer, optimal development includes cultural, social, and aesthetic sensibilities, as well as wholesome recreational activities.

The eighth of the goals, schools should provide beginning vocational training for all who seek or need it, is derived, in part, from McGucken's aims for the secondary schools in which he says that the student should be given help in becoming a member of his vocational group. To Horne, curriculum development includes the practical arts as one of its three considerations. In Democracy and
Education Dewey lists industrial competency as one of the aims of education. The Cardinal Principles implies instruction in vocation as its fourth point. The Educational Policies Commission considered vocational training so vital to all American youth that it listed the development of "salable skills" as the first of its ten "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth." In its eight "Continuous curriculum Experiences," The Ohio State University School suggested as its sixth point that of developing vocational adjustments and standards.

The ninth of the goals proposed, schools should promote the ability to think logically, and they should foster the spirit of and respect for learning, is derived from a composite of the educational philosophies. Each philosophy assumes that man is able to think logically when properly trained to do so, or when his intelligence is freed from ignorance and bias. Horne contends that both idealist and Aristotelian use the Socratic method of teaching. The Socratic method of teaching is based upon logical argument and thought process. Implicit in McGucken's faith that the schools should "fit the pupil to be an intelligent human being" is the idea that schools are obligated to stress logical thought processes. If, as Breed contends, science is designed to guide man, then man, to benefit from science, must be capable of logical thought processes. Similarly, the instrumentalist bases his faith upon man's
ability to think logically when his intelligence has been freed from ignorance and bias.

That the schools are obligated to foster the spirit of and respect for learning is in part derived from Hutchins' argument that liberal education includes knowledge of "the greatest ideas that the greatest men have had." Breed supports this goal in his statement that education is "the acquisition of subject matter, the formation of concepts, the development of general and abstract ideas." For the instrumentalist, respect for learning is fostered as a result of his abiding faith that thinking occurs only when a problem to be solved exists. Since the accumulated wisdom of the ages is drawn upon by the instrumentalist in his search for solution to his problems, it follows, in the opinion of this writer, that the spirit of and respect for learning will be enhanced.

In proposing the set of goals for the secondary schools and in defending them, this writer has assumed that this is a moral world. At the same time, this writer does not believe that the assumption of a moral world forces students upon a Procrustean bed, each emerging with identical outlooks and attitudes. This investigator believes that a study of Western civilization will reveal that man is infinitely variable. In the opinion of this writer, such a list of goals for secondary education as has been proposed in this chapter will allow for individual
growth while at the same time it will foster the spirit of group functioning.

In any event, the goals for American high schools proposed in this chapter will provide this investigator with a perspective and a framework for the remaining chapters. The goals will provide general criteria by which to evaluate the English program in the secondary school. After the writer has examined several sets of objectives for English programs, he will formulate a set of goals for language programs in secondary schools. The writer intends to use his list of aims for the English program as a basis for his theory of teaching literature in the American secondary school.
CHAPTER III

GOALS FOR HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH

In Chapter I, "Purpose and Nature of the Investigation," the writer stated that the intent of the chapter dealing with goals for high-school English would be that of formulating a list of aims for the secondary-school English program. As a guide for the undertaking, the goals for secondary schools that were established in Chapter II that are applicable to the teaching of English will be used.

In order to provide this portion of the study with an historical perspective, several authoritative statements of aims for high-school English will be examined, generally in the order in which they were first published. Finally, the writer will formulate and defend his own set of goals for high-school English.

As was shown in Chapter II, "Goals for Secondary Education," two objectives of the high-school program are those of continuing instruction in the basic skills and of transmitting the cultural heritage. While these aims are not to be regarded as the exclusive responsibility of the English program, it seems safe to assume that English departments will seek to achieve these two objectives for secondary schools in as full measure as is possible.
This is one of the assumptions upon which the present chapter rests.

A contemporary view of goals of high-school English. Even at the risk of introducing a note of pessimism, possibly even a suggestion of futility, into the present discussion, reference is made to a statement by J. N. Hook, who declares that—

A few years ago, a researcher listed all the aims of English teaching that he could find in print. He discovered the somewhat astonishing total of 1,581 aims. If his research were to be brought up to date, the number might exceed two thousand.¹

Now, if one were to avail oneself of these two thousand aims of teaching English, cull them, use them, much time and energy could thereby be saved. Such a solution to the problem of establishing goals for high-school English programs, however, would be totally unrealistic. Whether there are in print two thousand goals for secondary-school English or four thousand is not of paramount significance. What is significant is that teachers, and many others who are concerned, have been giving and continue to give thoughtful and sober consideration to the aims for teaching English in American high schools. It is evident that every generation needs to take stock of the aims for teaching English. By gaining an historical overview of past and present aims, by synthesizing older goals, teachers may

arrive at new understandings, new insights, and new sets of goals in an intelligent, scholarly fashion.

In Chapter II it was pointed out that the history of American secondary education is marked by change concerning the role of this uniquely American institution. In a similar manner, the history of the aims for teaching English reveals constantly evolving theories and concepts concerning goals for the English program, whether in Latin grammar schools, academies, or free public high schools. The writer believes that this assertion will be borne out in the following inspection of numerous authoritative goals for high-school English.

Resume of typical goals for high-school English.

Latin grammar schools gave major attention to instruction in Latin and Greek, but only passing consideration to those activities which today comprise the English curriculum. Since, at the time Latin grammar schools flourished, rules and forms governing Latin grammar were established as appropriate instructional materials, it was only natural that early instruction in English grammar should have been patterned after seventeenth-century methods employed in teaching Latin. Consequently, English grammar, like Latin, was taught as a formal discipline. Heavy emphasis was placed upon memorization of case forms, definition of terms, learning rules. Of English instruction in Latin grammar
schools, Hook says:

In the Latin Grammar schools, and usually in the academies, each student progressed at his own rate and recited individually....The emphasis in these schools was steadily upon memory, not upon interpretation and only seldomly upon creation.  

With the rise of the academy, increased attention was given to instruction in English. Even in the academy, however, the Latin and classical concept of teaching language persisted. Such an early grammarian as Lindley Murray was influential in fostering the teaching of English with Latin terminology and principles. As with teachers in Latin grammar schools, teachers of English in the academies placed heavy emphasis upon memorization of rules, definitions, and forms. The faith in this method of teaching English was based upon the belief that if the student knew the rules, he would automatically make application of correct forms and usages in written and oral communication. Little attention was given to actual writing in an extensive, realistic, or worthwhile sense.

One of the influential and forward-looking documents dealing with the teaching of English in the United States was the publication, Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools, published in 1917 under the editorship of James Fleming Hosic, who for many years gave leadership to the

\[2\text{Hook, op. cit., p. 4.}\]
National Council of Teachers of English. In this publication Hosic pointed out that the Harvard University Catalogue of 1865-66, specifying admission requirements, announced that candidates would be examined in reading aloud in English. Three years later the Harvard Catalogue stated that spelling, punctuation, and expression, as well as legible handwriting, were expected of all applicants for admission. Latin grammar schools and academies responded to this requirement by instituting courses in English composition. In brief, the goal of secondary-school English was, and still remains, for most schools at least to some extent, college preparatory.

Close analysis of the point of view of the National Joint Committee on English which prepared the Hosic report indicates three statements which were forty years ahead of the time. The report declared:

1. The college preparatory function of the high school is a minor one. Most of the graduates of the high school go, not into a higher institution, but into "life."

2. It is a mistake to regard English as merely a formal subject.

3. English must be regarded as social in content and social in method of acquirement. The chief function of language is communication. Hence the activities of the English classroom must provide for actual communication.3

When one considers that the prevailing national mood concerning the teaching of English prior to the publication of the Hosic report was that English was a formal discipline whose end was to prepare adolescents to enter college, one gains an understanding of the forward-looking spirit of the Hosic report. Regrettably, much of the wisdom of the Hosic document went unheeded in all too many schools. The report stated that the "Aims of the English course" were—

(a) To give the pupils command of the art of communication in speech and writing.

(b) To teach them to read thoughtfully and with appreciation, to form in them a taste for good reading, and to teach them how to find good books that are worth while.\(^4\)

Although the Hosic report was published in 1917, the two general aims quoted above are so contemporary in concept that they are believed by this investigator to be acceptable to most English teachers today.

Two documents, one concerning the teaching of English in Great Britain and the other relating to the teaching of language in France, merit consideration at this point because of the perspective they lend to this endeavor to formulate goals for English programs in America. In 1922 the British Government published a document, *The Teaching of English in England*. Scholars who wrote this treatise

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 30.
observed that among the best accomplishments that may be accredited to education are freedom and independence of thought, a wide outlook on life, and a strong sense of the difference between convention and reality. Regarding the reading of literature in the high schools, the authors said:

We must treat literature, not as language merely, not as an ingenious set of symbols, a superfluous kind of decoration, or a graceful set of traditional gestures, but as the self-expression of great natures, the record and rekindling of spiritual experiences....

Regarding the teaching of grammar in English schools, the British authorities observed:

In the past formal teaching of English Grammar was based upon Latin Grammar. It is now recognised that this was a mistake founded on a whole set of misconceptions. The rules governing Latin are almost wholly inapplicable to English.

As the perceptive reader will quickly discern, the British not only rejected the structural method of teaching English grammar, but they, by implication, advocated a functional approach to English instruction. The British scholars recommended a combination of instruction in the

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6Ibid., pp. 293-94.
theory of language with actual practice, both written and spoken, in the use of language.

An American scholar, Rollo Walter Brown, studied instruction in language in France, the results of which he recorded in his book, How the French Boy Learns to Write. According to Brown, in the French school the reading of literature included

the study of words, of grammatical and rhetorical principles, the making of close analysis, and the exercise of judgment; but these are all subordinate to the one purpose of catching the full force of the author's meaning. It is not exclusively historical, biographical or critical: it combines the best parts of all three.\footnote{Rollo Walter Brown, How the French Boy Learns to Write, pp. 123-25.}

As was pointed out in Chapter I of this study, the French method of reading literature is to be described under the general method of explication de texte.

No discussion of professional literature in the field of the teaching of English should omit mention of the work of Percival Chubb, author of The Teaching of English (1929). Chubb was impressed with the social, economic, and political problems resulting from the influx of millions of immigrants who could neither read nor speak the English language. Of these changes, Chubb observed:

Roughly speaking, English is now taught in our schools because of great social and economic
changes and new conditions of living, and the consequent failure or insufficiency of the means whereby proficiency was sought in the past... it is now fully recognized that we cannot make headway in our modernized environment without some proficiency in reading and writing.  

Chubb struck something of a contemporary note when he noted that a recurrent word in "recent" discussion of high-school objectives was "needs." According to Chubb, the word need connotes the practical and the vocational, although it includes the need for truth and beauty. Reading literature in high school "will open out into religion as well as philosophy--try as we might to mute the strings."  

Earlier in this discussion of some of the significant contributions to the professional literature dealing with the teaching of English, it was pointed out that in the Latin grammar schools, in the academies, and in the high schools an early practice was that of regarding English as a formal discipline which was to be mastered by memorization of rules and principles. One teacher, author, and critic who spoke out against such a view of the English program was Howard Francis Seely. Contrary to the prevailing opinion that English activities such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening are separate disciplines, requiring individual and detached treatment, Seely argued that all English activities are interrelated and complementary.

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9Ibid., p. 425.
Concerning the place of composition and literature in the secondary schools, Seely, in 1933, declared:

In the first place, then, I am convinced that both literature and composition should be present in our English activities each semester. As we have said before, they are two aspects of the same thing—one the process and the other the product. Work in the two should articulate just as completely as it can without being destructive of the immediate purposes and uses of either one. Neither should dominate the other. Each should bolster, support and clarify its counterpart, and can readily do so if the relation of the two is lifelike.10

Both oral and written composition should be a life-like reaction to some meaningful experience on the part of the student, according to Seely. Four key words indicate Seely's attitude toward these specific activities that he classified under English composition. They are formative, remedial, continuous, and cumulative. As a guiding principle for specific instruction in English composition, Seely proposed six objectives:

1. To foster the development by our pupils of progressively increasing desire to express themselves effectively in language.

2. To bring pupils to recognize that effectiveness of expression depends in no small part upon the employment of the various language symbols according to accepted standards.

3. To establish the fact that language is at once the tool of thought and its mirror; and

10Howard Francis Seely, On Teaching English, p. 266.
that both thinking itself and the expression of thought are only as accurate and meaningful as the language employed in the kindred process.

4. To assist pupils to eradicate from their usage the most flagrant and destructive errors to which their expression is individually subject.

5. To make as certain as possible that the major principles of usage are so completely understood and mastered by the pupils that they will function automatically.

6. To promote among pupils the habit of seeking the aid offered them by various sources in solving the language problems with which they will continuously be confronted.11

This statement of objectives does not conceive of the English program as a formal discipline, nor does it view grammatical instruction in the abstract. Rather, Seely's thesis was that students learn to command the language through realistic and meaningful experiences in the correct use of language in the classroom.

In his book, Enjoying Poetry in School (1931), Seely suggested three "immediate" objectives for reading literature in school, namely,

to enable pupils and teachers to enjoy books together; to promote the development of the discriminative taste in literature; and to help boys and girls form a lasting desire for the comradeship of books.12

11Ibid., p. 17.

12Howard Francis Seely, Enjoying Poetry in School, p. 176.
In these three "immediate" aims for reading literature Seely did not advocate reading didactic or necessarily inspirational literature. Rather than stressing reading literature for discipline or vocabulary building alone, Seely placed emphasis upon enjoyment of literature as a prerequisite to developing discriminating taste in literature.

In the 1930's the National Council of Teachers of English published three professional books dealing with the teaching of English. In the first of these works, *An Experience Curriculum in English*, the Council advocated that all departments in the secondary school accept responsibility for language efficiency on the part of high-school students. Regarding interdepartmental endeavors to improve written and oral communication, the NCTE declared:

> All the teachers of all the subjects should be, to some extent, teachers of English. Science teachers who require students to keep notebooks, history teachers who expect "outside" reading and oral and written reports, mathematics teachers who depend upon pupils' reciting and demonstrating, all teachers who cause pupils to employ reading and language, must assume some responsibility for the quality of the reading and the language.¹³

One method of achieving school-wide responsibility for

language proficiency suggested by the NCTE is the correlated curriculum. Within such a curriculum, all teachers are language teachers, at least in the larger, general sense of the word. NCTE makes an appeal for integration of learning experiences, somewhat similar to Hosic's and Seely's contention that all learning is part of a general world frame. Concerning such a view of learning the Council stated:

A curriculum so planned and executed will deal with life, with the subject-matter of instruction, with experience, and with the child himself as wholes. To deal with the student as a dynamic whole, it must deal with him in the midst of genuine living, posing problems of immediate significance to himself, and devising and using means for their solution.  

For years one goal of reading literature in the high school has been the development of increased appreciation of the written word. Enlarged experience as a result of a developing sensitivity to human problems as reflected in literature has been one means of gaining increased appreciation. In the last of the three works dealing with experience in the English program, Conducting Experiences in English, the NCTE made the observation that "the reader's own experience

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14NCTE, A Correlated Curriculum, pp. 4-5.
is the key to literary appreciation. He takes as much of the book as he can, rewriting it, as it were, in the imagery of his own experience." The NCTE stated that more and more English teachers were being guided by the "dynamic philosophy of English as experience."16

As this writer has been inspecting various proposals for the goals of English programs in American secondary schools, he has become increasingly aware that these numerous proposals have almost constantly moved away from the "ground-to-be-covered" method of teaching found in the Latin grammar school to a theory of language which requires that students be involved in the use of language, oral and written, and in reading.

In 1942, the NCTE studied English programs and formulated thirteen for teaching English in American secondary schools. The basic aims for English instruction in American schools, as given in the report, may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Language is a basic instrument in the maintenance of the democratic way of life.

2. Increasingly free and effective interchange of ideas is vital to life in a democracy.

15 NCTE, Conducting Experiences in English, p. 4.

16 Ibid., p. 3.
3. Language study in the schools must be based on the language needs of living.

4. Language ability expands with the individual's experience.

5. English enriches personal living and deepens understanding of social relationships.

6. English uses literature of both past and present to illumine the contemporary scene.

7. Among the nations represented in the program of literature, America should receive major emphasis.

8. A study of the motion picture and radio is indispensable in the English program.

9. The goals of instruction in English are, in the main, the same for all young people, but the heights to be attained in achieving any one of them and the material used for the purposes will vary with individual need.

10. The development of social understanding through literature requires reading materials within the comprehension, the social intelligence, and the emotional range of the pupils whose lives they expect to influence.

11. English pervades the life and work of the schools.

12. English enriches personality by providing experiences of intrinsic worth for the individual.

13. Teachers with specialized training are needed for effective instruction in the language arts.

The foregoing goals for English instruction in secondary schools envisions a correlated curriculum with language instruction the partial function of all teachers. In

these statements of goals English is not regarded as a separate, self-contained discipline. Provision is made for individual differences and interests.

Louise Rosenblatt, in her book, *Literature as Exploration* (1938), stated that the English teacher has a complex role to perform. She contended that the teacher of literature deals with subjects that are often regarded as the province of the sociologist, psychologist, philosopher, and historian. Rosenblatt declared:

> Preoccupied with the major aims of our particular fields, we are often not conscious of the fact that we are dealing, in the liveliest terms, with subjects and problems usually thought of as the province of the sociologist, the psychologist, the philosopher, or historian.18

While there seems little reason to doubt Rosenblatt's assertion concerning the far-reaching implications of reading literature, this writer detects a possible danger in some of the theories set forth in *Literature as Exploration*.

Throughout her work, *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt stressed the importance of reading literature with emphasis upon the sociological implications of that literature. In all fairness to Miss Rosenblatt it must

18 Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 5.
be pointed out clearly that she did not advise the reading of literature as though it were a social tract or polemic. At the same time, it must be recognized that she gave little attention to the reading of literature from the aesthetic viewpoint. The writer believes that Arnold's dictum for the critic to see the object steadily and to see it whole, is quite appropriate as a guide for the teacher of English. This would mean, of course, that the teacher would not only examine sociological, philosophical, and psychological implications of a particular literary selection, but he would as well give attention to the creative and aesthetic aspects of the objects under scrutiny.

Lucia B. Mirrielees, in her work, *Teaching Composition and Literature in Junior and Senior High School* (1943), advocated the establishment of certain "minimum essentials" which must be mastered by a pupil at each grade level before he may be advanced to the next higher grade. In a statement explaining the theory which underlies "minimum essentials," Mirrielees said:

In each term there should be a few decencies in form and written expression that can be acquired by every pupil before he can be passed to a higher grade. These decencies in form and written expression must have been termed "The Minimum Essentials in the Mechanics of Composition."\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\)Lucia B. Mirrielees, *Teaching Composition and Literature in Junior and Senior High School*, p. 60.
This investigator believes that within the theory set forth by Birrielees there is implicit a certain amount of ground-to-be-covered. In brief, the pupil must master a certain amount of grammar before he can be passed on to the next higher grade. Such a theory of teaching English composition implies to this writer that the secondary school would find it necessary to adopt as one of its goals the same aims that guided the Latin grammar schools in their approach to teaching English. As has been shown above, Hosic, Seely, and the NCTE have rejected this aim of teaching language as a self-contained discipline.

Lou La Brant, former president of the National Council of Teachers of English, in a book entitled We Teach English (1951), stated that the high school must provide additional instruction in reading techniques. For years many high-school teachers of English had assumed that reading instruction was unnecessary at that level. In the opinion of this writer La Brant was quite correct in urging that reading instruction be offered, when and where needed, at the secondary-school level. Concerning this objective, La Brant stated:

Five years of experimentation led me to one demonstrable need: high school students frequently (not always) needed help in learning how to read adult literature, and they also needed time and encouragement to read.20

20Lou La Brant, We Teach English, p. vi.
Not only did La Brant charge the English teacher with responsibility for providing instruction in reading, she also asserted that language teachers must demonstrate their zest for and enjoyment of adult reading. The teacher should read critically and rapidly since he has accepted the role of an "expert in reading."

A significant contribution to the professional literature which deals with English goals is the publication of the NCTE entitled *The English Language Arts* (1952). According to the Commission on the English Curriculum which wrote this major work on the teaching of English, the fundamental purposes of American education are these:

(1) cultivation of satisfying and wholesome personal lives, (2) development of social sensitivity and effective participation in the life of the local community, the nation, and the world, and (3) preparation for vocational competence.

As the Commission viewed the language arts program in a democracy, this area of the total school program must "at the same time help the individual student to grow into the fullness of his personal stature and to play a responsible part in the group life."

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22 Ibid., p. 7.
The Commission declared that the individual must have acquired a sound hierarchy of values before he can make any significant contribution to society as a whole. The English language arts program must make a vital contribution in assisting the individual to acquire the ability to discriminate among values. Teaching language arts should seek to develop in students the ability to think and to communicate in the English language and to understand the humanizing value of literature. Speaking of the English language arts, the Commission maintained:

Its goals are, in a word, the linguistic abilities and the awareness of the values of life which are required by the fully mature civilized human being. 23

Analysis of the general view taken by the Commission concerning the role of the English language arts indicates a world view, a social concept of the language program, and a concern for individual and social development of American boys and girls. Since the National Council of Teachers of English serves as the official spokesman for the English teachers of America, the above-mentioned concepts relating to goals for high-school English are to be regarded as influential and significant.

In Chapter III of the work, "Goals and Experiences in

23Ibid., p. 8.
the Language Arts Program," ten major aims for teaching English were proposed:

1. Wholesome personal development
2. Dynamic and worthwhile allegiance through heightened moral perception and a personal sense of values
3. Growing intellectual curiosity and capacity for critical thinking
4. Effective use of language in the daily affairs of life
5. Habitual and intelligent use of the mass modes of communication
6. Growing personal interests and increasingly mature standards of enjoyment
7. Effective habits of work
8. Competent use of language and reading for vocational purposes
9. Social sensitivity and effective participation in the group life
10. Faith in and allegiance to the basic values of a democratic society.24

Inspection of these ten goals for Language instruction reveals that English teachers should be concerned with the total language program, reading, speaking, listening, and writing. No longer is the English program to be thought of in terms of so much ground-to-be-covered. No longer do compositional activities imply memorization of case forms, rules, and principles with little or no tangible application. The need is for a combination of theory and practice. Development of critical insight and power, concern for sound thinking, and use of correct language habits in daily life are some of the current

24Ibid., pp. 41-54.
objectives of a desirable language program, according to NCTE.

Just four years after the National Council of Teachers of English published its work, The English Language Arts (1952), it issued The English Language Arts in the Secondary Schools (1956). In the latter work, the Council took the position that if schools are to meet new challenges to the adolescent midway in the twentieth century, they must meet the demand for increased intellectual power which has resulted from a faster tempo and from the mechanization of American society today.

According to the NCTE, language arts teachers accept personal, social, and occupational competence as the goal of all educational activity. Activities in the language arts should be directed toward the--

1. Cultivation of wholesome personal living
   a. Sense of values
   b. Perspective on one’s self and one’s time
   c. Extension of experience
   d. Ability to use cultural resources
   e. High degree of competence in basic skills
   f. Intellectual curiosity and creativeness
   g. Capacity for logical and critical thinking
   h. Personal integrity
   i. Intelligent consumption of goods and services

2. Development of social sensitivity and effective participation in group life
   a. Sensing values in the current scene and their relation to the contributions of past and future
b. Recognition of dignity and worth of the individual
c. Control of prejudices
d. Skill in the art of persuasion
e. Ability to communicate with people of different backgrounds
f. A sense of responsibility for critical reading

3. Linguistic competence necessary for vocational efficiency
   a. following and giving directions
   b. Keeping up with technical knowledge
   c. Maintaining effective interpersonal relationships
   d. Developing skills in business letter writing.

Language arts programs in the secondary schools should strive to strike a balance between development of skill in individual activities and skill in group activities in the use of language. In the ideal high-school English program today, the schools should give equal attention to the development of aesthetic sensibilities and vocational competencies among American youths of high-school age.

A very recent work that deals with the teaching of English in secondary schools is Don Wolfe's *Creative Ways to Teach English, Grades 7 to 12* (1958). Wolfe assumes that English teachers can best serve their students if they take the problem-solving approach as a means of determining goals for their classes. Wolfe feels that to

the English teacher few matters are more important than bringing into the classroom discussion the realities that plague his students. Of all the keys to eloquent and spontaneous expression, none gives surer release than a conviction in the mind of the student that the topic he is writing or speaking about is by his own standards of judgment a burning reality.

Although Wolfe makes no formal delineation of a set of goals for his English program, his contention that the English classroom should seek to reflect, in as many ways as is possible, the real-life problems that confront young people, is in effect a declaration of principle, and thus of objective. Wolfe points up the need for increased attention to the solution of student problems, saying that—

When we face a class of thirty students, intending perhaps that hour to teach them adverbs or to read a few passages from Idylls of the King, we are often aware of the gap between the thinking and feeling world of student problems and the literary or grammatical world into which we wish to plunge them.26

Wolfe argues that until American English teachers assume a responsibility for finding out the fears, problems, and obstacles of each student and for encouraging him to express his feelings about each one, the student cannot find the

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26 Don Wolfe, Creative Ways to Teach English, Grades 7 to 12, p. 34.
natural level of his writing power nor move toward finding mature answers to his problems.

The reader will recall that writers such as Brown, Chubb, Hosic, and Seely maintained that the student must be treated as something more than a receptacle. The English Language Arts (1952) and The English Language Arts in the Secondary School (1956) adopted a liberal, forward-looking attitude toward the aims of the English program in the American high school today. Professional writers today express concern that the English program provide for the cultivation of satisfying and wholesome personal lives, the development of social sensitivity, and preparation for vocational competence; they declare that students should be given opportunity to grow into the fullness of their personal stature, that they develop sound values, and that they learn to discriminate among values; they urge that the English program help students to develop into fully mature, civilized human beings.

Any new set of goals for high-school English should retain the best that has been thought and said in the past regarding the aims of language programs, combined with those statements which seem most pertinent and valid for this day and time. In his examination of several sets of goals for the English curriculum, both past and present, this writer has given attention to what seemed to him to
be those ultimate aims that are worthy of inclusion in a set of objectives for today’s English program.

Having examined numerous sets of objectives for the English program in secondary schools, the writer now presents his own list of goals for the English offerings in the American high school today.

**Goals for high-school English.** The English language arts program in the American high school should seek—

1. To assist pupils to achieve skillful and sensitive use of the modes of communication by providing instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The foregoing fourfold objective of the English program involves the student in the major activities of a language program. Such a view of English is an enlargement upon the earlier theory that instruction in grammar comprised an adequate language course. In giving equal stress to reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the writer believes that the statement reflects the past and the present in its scope. It will be recalled that in 1952, the NOTE reported in its publication, *The English Language Arts*, that one of the ten "major goals" for teaching English is "competent use of language and reading...."

2. To help students develop an awareness of the various levels of language usage and to encourage them to practice discrimination in their own levels of usage.
It is now almost aphoristic that one of the marks of an educated man or woman is the ability to adjust the level of the language used to suit the occasion. Everyday social and business conventions require that every citizen be familiar with levels of language usage and employ tact, taste, and judiciousness in his own language habits. This writer subscribes to the theory of language that usage practices change from decade to decade. What was appropriate in 1900 may or may not be correct today. On this point The English Language Arts says that "An educated user of English will vary his speech and writing from extreme formality and literary elegance to extreme informality, including slang and dialectical expressions." Instruction in the levels of language usage seems to be a clear-cut responsibility of the English program.

3. To provide students with an understanding of the principles of language usage, including knowledge of the rules of grammar, and the nomenclature by which rules and principles are described. Practical application of these principles will be required in written and spoken English.

In the opinion of this writer, no student can achieve a totally satisfactory command of the language unless he has mastered some of the principles of language, its rules, and

27The English Language Arts, op. cit., p. 278.
its nomenclature. This point of view is supported by The English Language Arts in the Secondary School. In discussing the question of when and how grammar should be taught, the NCTE publication suggests that the informed teacher "can decide which grammatical concepts will help an individual student (or a group having similar characteristics) to write and speak more effectively and correctly."  

With the NCTE writers, however, teaching grammar is no self-contained discipline. The emphasis should be placed upon practical application of the theory taught. With that idea this writer is in agreement.

4. To enable pupils, by means of the study of literature, to achieve better understanding of themselves and their fellow human beings.

In the opinion of this writer, one of the reasons why many high-school students today dislike reading literature is that to them literature means the study of isolated facts about belles-lettres—reading the lives of the authors, glossing words, memorizing famous lines. While this writer realizes that there may be value in such activities, he holds to the belief that a literary endeavor is a communication of some kind and that it is the role of the English teacher to help the student to determine as nearly as possible just what that communication means. It is assumed

28 The English Language Arts in the Secondary School, op. cit., p. 364.
It is assumed that the artist uses the stuff of human experience, that he organizes it in some manner, and that he seeks to give meaning to it. By reading good literature, by sharing vicariously in the experience of others, the student is brought to a fuller, more complete understanding of human motivation, including his own compulsions.

5. To encourage pupils, by means of a rich reading experience, to mature intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and socially.

If it is true, as has been said in this study, that the secondary schools are charged with the obligation of helping young people to assume their roles as adults, rendering service as effective citizens, then it would follow that achieving maturity is one of the requirements for fulfilling this aim. A rich reading experience in the literatures of the world can do much toward helping the adolescent reach emotional, intellectual, psychological, and social maturity. By sharing in the experiences of other human beings from distant times and places, the student is given broadened insight into the nature of adulthood.

6. To help students achieve a heightened sense of personal values and the ability to discriminate among values as a result of the thoughtful weighing of the ideas found in literature.
The development of a high sense of personal values is widely accepted as one of the obligations of the emotionally mature individual. Because of the abstract nature of value judgments, the teacher who would emphasize values needs some tangible object upon which he can focus his and his students' attention. Thoughtful weighing of values, such as those reflected in the plays of Shakespeare inevitably leads to a heightened sense of personal values on the part of the high-school student. Ability to discriminate wisely among conflicting values is one of the earmarks of an educated man or woman.

In order to make the foregoing six goals for the teaching of high-school English more easily accessible they are listed below:

The English language arts in the American high school should seek--

1. To assist pupils to achieve skillful and sensitive use of the modes of communication by providing instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

2. To help students develop an awareness of the various levels of language usage and to encourage them to practice discrimination in their own levels of usage.

3. To provide students with an understanding of the principles of language, including knowledge of the rules of grammar, and the nomenclature by which rules and principles are described. Practical application of these principles will be required in written and spoken English.
4. To enable pupils, by means of the study of literature, to achieve better understanding of themselves and their fellow human beings.

5. To encourage pupils, by means of a rich reading experience, to mature intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, and socially.

6. To help students achieve a heightened sense of personal values and the ability to discriminate among values as a result of the thoughtful weighing of the ideas found in literature.

Summary. Historically, change has marked the various statements of goals for language programs in American high schools. In this chapter it has been pointed out that early English instruction in this country was an outgrowth of the methods used in the Latin grammar schools in teaching Latin and Greek. Emphasis was given to memorization of rules, definitions, and forms. In his goals for high-school English this writer generally has rejected the earlier approach to teaching language. The list of aims established above generally reflects some of the basic objectives set forth in the years between 1917 and the present.

In conclusion, this writer, in proposing six goals for high-school English today, has attempted to benefit from the mistakes and shortcomings of the past. At the same time, this investigator has sought to incorporate into his own set of goals the best from the past with what seems to be the most desirable from the current scene. The goals
proposed above represent a synthesis which, it is hoped, will provide a link between yesterday and tomorrow in the teaching of English in American secondary schools.

In Chapter IV, "Nature and Status of Reading in High Schools," the writer proposes to examine some of the research in the field of reading, to define the nature of reading, and to establish the status of reading in high schools today. In the process, the writer proposes to explore the method of *explication de texte* as one approach to the reading of literature in the high school today.
CHAPTER IV

NATURE AND STATUS OF READING IN HIGH SCHOOLS

That Americans do not read as much, as well, nor as
discriminately as the responsibility placed upon the
ordinary citizen in an increasingly complex society demands
was stated in Chapter I of the present investigation. This
is one of the assumptions upon which this study is based.
A second assumption underlying this inquiry is predicated
upon the belief that at present in the American high school
there is urgent need for additional experimentation and
research as one of the means by which young men and women
can be led to more sensitive and insightful reading.

What numerous authorities in the field of reading
have to say about the basic assumptions upon which this
study is conducted remains to be set forth. To review
some of the basic research that has been accomplished in
the past decade and to discover some pertinent conclusions
to which the documentary evidence points will be the major
goals of this chapter. Also, the writer will examine the
nature of reading, since the explications of literary
selections which comprise the latter portion of this study
represent one approach to improved reading.
The complexity to be encountered in the field of reading was suggested in Chapter I of this study when the writer referred to Leary's finding that annually there are in excess of 2,500 separate reported studies dealing with reading and problems relating to reading. To what conclusions do these reports point? What are the agreements? What are the conflicts? Is the evidence conclusive? What are the trends, if any?

The reading abilities and habits of pupils. Even a passing examination of the professional writing concerning reading reveals that there are numerous points of view concerning the status of reading in the American secondary school today. William S. Gray stated in an article in the Elementary School Journal that he had collected all of the evidence he could find that threw light on the status of reading in American schools. The results of his studies were "illuminating," Gray observed, declaring that--

They show, first, that there never was a period in the history of this country when as large a per cent of the boys and girls at any grade level read as well silently as they do today....

The findings show, second, that whereas achievement in reading for the country as a whole is better today than formerly, schools and school systems vary widely in their comparative standings in reading today and three decades ago....

The evidence secured reveals a third fact of great importance. It shows that the prevailing
deep concern about reading grows largely out of the fact that the demands on readers are far greater today than formerly, not only in the amount and variety of what is read, but also in the breadth and depth of interpretation required in the choice of materials read.  

Gray took cognizance of the need to help children to become more discriminating, penetrating, and self-reliant readers. Because of changing conditions and new demands made upon the ordinary citizen today, Gray argued that at present boys and girls must develop greater reading competence than did children in the past. That today's schools generally are doing a satisfactory job of teaching reading was Gray's fundamental conclusion in the above-quoted paragraphs.

In 1948 the National Society for the Study of Education published its Forty-Seventh Yearbook, Reading in the High School, in which national authorities in the field of reading gave serious consideration to the status of reading in American high schools. The NSSE Yearbook pointed out that during recent years impressive evidence had been secured which revealed wide range in the reading ability found among students, the number and character of the reading difficulties encountered, and the effect of appropriate motivation and guidance on efficiency in reading.

and study activities. Reading authorities who collaborated in the preparation of the NSSE Yearbook agreed that—

Evidence secured during recent years shows clearly that the amount and quality of the personal reading of many high-school and college students is unsatisfactory. Some read widely; others read little, if at all. Some pursue well-balanced programs of good reading; others read material of little personal or social value or even that which produces undesirable effects....

Analysis of the two points of view quoted above reveals that both Gray and the NSSE deal in generalities since neither presents any data to support positions maintained. In fairness to both Gray and the NSSE, it should be said that neither makes any claim as to scientific objectivity. It is held, however, that the conclusions arrived at do reflect an over-all picture of reading in American schools.

In Chapter III, "Goals of High-School English," this writer concluded that one aim of the literature program in high school is that of helping boys and girls to establish worthwhile, fruitful reading habits. If the schools have been successful in accomplishing this goal, then adults should be reading with mature skills and tastes. Are adults engaging in generally fruitful, worthwhile reading activities? The National Opinion Research Center of

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the University of Denver surveyed seventeen American cities in which 2,114 interviews were conducted with adults, both men and women, in all social and economic brackets. Findings in this research indicated that 44 per cent of the American people spent no more than one-half hour per week reading books of any kind. Further, the survey revealed that while reading was a favorite diversion for two out of every five adults, most people spent more time reading newspapers and magazines than they did in reading books.

The NORC reported that--

On the other hand, 57 per cent of the persons who have never gone beyond the eighth grade, 37 per cent of those with high-school training, and 21 per cent of the college-educated say they never read books or devote more than half an hour a week to such reading.

What do people read who do take books out of libraries? The NORC found that most people said they preferred non-fiction to fiction and were more interested in subjects such as human behavior and understanding of personalities than they were in more specialized areas like politics or poetry.

Another authority in the field of reading, Leary, found that research showed that high-school graduates and

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4 Ibid., p. 6.
college students were "apathetic" in their attitude toward reading. Their reading taste for current affairs and for new and up-to-the-minute escape literature was satisfied through newspapers and a total of 450 different periodicals, of which the Reader's Digest ranked first in preference, with Life a close second, followed by Time, the Saturday Evening Post and Good Housekeeping. Leary reported that research in reading showed:

1. That in an ordinary "good library town," card holders, of whom half are children, comprise only 25 to 30 per cent of the population.

2. That the typical borrower is a young woman who reads in the course of a month four novels of no particular worth, one better novel, one entertaining travel account, usually written by an indifferent author, whose name will never "be cut in marble on the face of library buildings."

3. That in New York City, 10 per cent of the readers account for 67 per cent of the books withdrawn.

4. That, whereas, increases in American expenditures tend to parallel increases in income, they do so in the following order: recreation, contributions, personal taxes, education, tobacco, and finally reading.5

Ten years later, Gordon Dupee, president of the Great Books Foundation, writing in the Saturday Review, confirmed Leary's findings about the "apathetic" state of adult reading in America. Dupee said that "ours is a society

which does not honor reading. We turn our own deprecia-
tion of reading to indignation and blame the school.6
Speaking of why Johnny cannot read, Dupee said that,
bluntly put, if Johnny's parents do not read, John probably
takes the view that why should he? Johnny has an idea
that television programs do not end when he is put to bed.
And Johnny knows his parents do not turn off the television
set when he goes to bed.

Dupee found that in America one-fourth of all college
graduates did not read one book per year, and three-fifths
of high-school graduates did not read a book per year. The
Great Books program, according to Dupee, had 25,000 adults
involved, yet he noted that Mickey Spillane had sold more
than 25,000,000 copies of his books. As Dupee saw the
national reading situation, it was darkening. Concerning
this conclusion, Dupee said:

Today, at any time, only 17 per cent of the
adults in the United States may be found reading
a book—any book, Spinoza or Spillane. In England,
where schooling is far from universal, 55 per cent
of the population at any given time may be found
reading a book....the American Institute of Public
Opinion found in 1937 that 29 per cent of all
adults were reading a book at the time they were
interviewed. I repeat, the figure today is 17 per
cent.7

6Gordon Dupee, "Can Johnny's Parents Read?" The
Saturday Review, XXXIX (June 2, 1956), p. 5.

7Ibid., p. 6.
Dupee showed further that only thirteen out of every 100 citizens borrowed books from the public library. Only 5 per cent of the books borrowed by the "miniscule" 13 per cent of the population were "good reading." Of the books borrowed from public libraries, 38 per cent were regarded by Dupee as "low-level material."

One further piece of evidence may be cited concerning the status of reading in America today. Max J. Herzberg, writing in the *English Journal*, in January, 1958, quoted publishers' statistics on the best-selling books in America. The following list of all-time best sellers in America would indicate the contemporary low level of reading taste among the book-buying audience, it seems to this writer. Herzberg quoted the author, title, date published, and number of copies sold to the end of December, 1957, as follows:

1. Sheldon's *In His Steps*, 1897, 8,000,000 copies
2. Spock's *Book of Baby and Child Care*, 1946, 7,859,000 copies
3. Caldwell's *God's Little Acre*, 1933, 6,582,553 copies
4. *Better Homes and Gardens Cook Book*, 1930, 5,806,586 copies
5. Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, 1937, 5,000,000 copies
6. Carnegie's *How to Win Friends*, 1937, 4,877,511 copies
7. Spillane's *I, the Jury*, 1947, 4,441,837 copies
8. Spillane's *The Big Kill*, 1951, 4,148,840 copies

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Further, Herzberg pointed out that the publishing house of Little Brown Company recently issued a bulletin in which this publisher asserted that "Mickey Spillane may be regarded as the most widely read author in the United States today. His thirty books have sold well over 40,000,000 copies and have been translated into twenty different languages." If these figures of the leading best sellers may be relied upon as indicative of the level of reading taste and adult practices relating to reading, just what can one say in the face of them?

That at least a third of the entire secondary-school population—grades nine through twelve—is incapable of mastering the stock tools of learning (reading and writing) well enough to profit from textbook instruction was the argument advanced in an article by George H. Henry. Henry, himself a secondary-school principal with more than twenty years of school experience, averred that while he was

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10Ibid., p. 46.
writing no diatribe against the schools, his experience showed that--

No method and no brilliance of teaching can improve these youth enough to make any appreciable difference in their literacy. By testing any graduating class of any high school in the country, the skeptic can see for himself what is an old story to teachers: that a third of the high school cannot read on a fifth-grade level or write a coherent paragraph reasonably free of errors.11

Henry was careful to point out that the lower one-third of the school population was not comprised of mentally backward children. The great majority of them were normal, wholesome, even talented, responsible boys and girls, according to Henry. They were "non-verbal."

While admitting that there were many poor readers in American secondary schools, Paul Witty rejected Henry's claims, in his book, Reading and Modern Education, declaring:

The number is not so high as the sensational figures given by Henry. Nor is the retardation in reading so severe or so great. Evidence is lacking to substantiate the assertion that one third of our high school pupils "cannot read on a fifth-grade level."12


12Paul Witty, Reading in Modern Education, p. 183.
Even though there is sufficient evidence to point to the conclusion that at present there is no single, universally-agreed-upon outlook concerning the status of reading in the secondary schools, the foregoing statements indicate a keen awareness of the problems relating to reading. The foregoing assertions about the status of reading point to the conclusion that Americans do not read as much, as well, nor as discriminatingly as the pressures placed upon a free, independent people demand. What forces are at work in American society and in American secondary schools which have created such a circumstance? It seems evident that the answer to the question is central to the over-all objectives of this investigation, namely, the examination of explication de texte as one means of improving the reading of literature in high school.

Forces affecting reading in the high schools. Any inquiry into the nature and extent of forces affecting reading in the high schools today inevitably encounters many complex and extremely inter-related problems. In Chapters II and III of this study the writer has shown how changing concepts of the role of the individual and his relationship to society have greatly affected the secondary-school curriculum and the English offerings within that curriculum. Similarly, the extended scope of high-school enrollment, changing ideas of equality of opportunity for all, increased pressures for vocational
training, and extended compulsory attendance laws all have had profound and far-reaching influences upon the level of reading in secondary schools.

That a tidal wave of new students which has swept across the schools of America since World War II has created innumerable educational problems is now an accepted fact. Over-crowded classrooms, poorly paid, and in many instances, inadequately trained teachers, have all been contributing factors that have influenced the status of reading in the American secondary school. Duker and Nally made a study of forces affecting reading in American schools in 1956 and found that--

Classes today are being held not only in jammed school buildings but in motels, garages, church basements—wherever there is space. Under these conditions it has become increasingly difficult to make proper provision for the individual differences which exist among children and for harassed teachers to meet each child's own particular needs.13

Another factor that continues to exert influence upon the quality of education in America today as reported by Duker and Nally is the relative financial position of the teacher today. Notwithstanding salary increases for teachers granted since World War II, Duker and Nally stated

that the schools and teachers were relatively better off, financially speaking, twenty years earlier than at the time of their writing.

Teacher recruitment has been complicated by the unfavorable economic position occupied by the teacher today. Duker and Nally observed that recruitment of the most desirable kind of young people for the teaching profession presented a "major problem" and saw little hope for its early solution:

This situation is not likely to be altered radically so long as the American public continues to spend more money on cosmetics, liquor, and tobacco than it is willing to invest in education for its youth.14

America's commitment to the ideal of universal, free public education is a factor that affects the status of reading, indeed, the status of all educational activity undertaken today in the secondary schools. Duker and Nally reported that schools today must cater to wider differences in aptitude, ability, and interests than did the schools of fifty years ago. In their view, the wide diversity in ability among students in the contemporary high school meant that the final outcome of American schooling must inevitably cover a wide range of performance.

John J. DeBoer, writing in the *English Journal*, attributed success or failure for many adolescents in acquiring mature reading tastes to the socio-economic and cultural level from which they come. DeBoer asserted that

How well the child succeeds in reading depends in large measure on what he brings to the printed page. His attitude toward people, books, and school itself; his stock of meaningful impressions; his knowledge of language; his vocational aspirations and prospects—these and many other factors will determine the degree of success in reading. All of these are profoundly affected by his social, economic, and cultural background.15

DeBoer reported that the high-school student who comes from the "other side of the track" may often lack the images and concepts that he will find in his literature. It should be noted, however, that the exact opposite may also be true, that often-times children who come from slum areas of sub-standard economic circumstances can more nearly understand John Steinbeck or Erskine Caldwell than can the child from suburbia.

Another force that affects reading lies within the high schools themselves. McCullough, Strang, and Traxler summarized some of these forces in school reading programs which tend to impede the reading effectiveness and maturity

of high-school students as follows:

1. Lack of continuity from the kindergarten to college
2. Curriculum revision without teacher education
3. Misuse of tests
4. Too little understanding of the individual
5. Unsound promotional policies
6. Disregard for reading readiness
7. Lack of suitable reading materials
8. Overemphasis of certain skills and practices, and neglect of others
9. Lack of balance between silent and oral reading
10. Overemphasis on details and verbatim answers
11. Required responses inappropriate to the passage read
12. Overprodding the slow reader.\(^\text{16}\)

If, then, as some authorities on reading have alleged, students do not read as well, nor as widely as they should, the fault may lie in poor teaching in the area of reading. Thus, some detractors of the public schools have argued that the wrong method of teaching reading is in use in most schools. Such was the argument advanced by one such critic, Rudolf Flesch, in a controversial book, *Why Johnny Can't Read— and What You Can Do About It*. Flesch attacked the word-recognition method of teaching reading. He alleged that Johnny cannot read because his teachers have taught him to recognize words without teaching him the letters of the alphabet, nor have his teachers taught him single phonetic sounds. Flesch recommended that simple phonics and syllabication be taught first rather than sight recognition of words. He stated that when teachers attempt to provide

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instruction in reading by sight recognition, they approach the English language as if it were Chinese, a language comprised of ideographs and having no alphabet.\(^{17}\)

In attacking the method used by many teachers in teaching reading, Flesch raised another major question that is vital to the status of reading in the high schools and to the problem of this investigation, namely, the nature of reading itself. What actually occurs when a student reads?

**The nature of reading.** During World War II, the U. S. Army adopted a definition of reading for inductees which stated that literacy consisted of the ability to read journalistic writing and the ability to write a personal letter. While such a simplified understanding as that adopted by the Army for the complex nature of reading has unmistakable advantages of a practical nature, no serious student of reading would be satisfied with such a definition. The finer and more profound language experiences of rhythm, imagery, symbols are omitted from reading, according to the Army definition. This writer believes that adult reading must consist of more complex activities than are required by Army standards of World War II.

Purpus recognized the danger of assuming that literacy

\(^{17}\text{Rudolf Flesch, Why Johnny Can't Read--and What You Can Do About It, p. 5.}\)
involves simply the ability to read a newspaper. Speaking of the amount of illiteracy in America, Purpus bluntly stated that the incidence of "real illiteracy" in this country was rising:

A more shocking fact is that an increasing number of the illiterates are young people who enter and even graduate from our colleges and universities.

This charge is not true, of course, if one uses the term literate to mean capable of recognizing letters in sequences and of combining letters into recognizable words. Such a definition, however, is thoroughly unrealistic; for such an achievement is in itself of little value.\textsuperscript{18}

To Purpus the word literacy meant the ability to read various materials with comprehension and to write coherently.

Not only is there disagreement among reading authorities as to the status of reading in American high schools, but little agreement is found as to what the act of reading ultimately implies. Leary pointed up the varying interpretations given to the meaning of the term reading when she stated:

Were future research to do no more than establish a common agreement as to the meaning of the word "reading," which all the scientific investigations

to date have not done, it would do much to clarify our thinking and to minimize disparities among research findings generally. At the present time, the word "reading" is often used narrowly to refer to the mere recognition of written or printed symbols. Again, it implies a highly complex process involving perception and interpretation; while, on occasions, it is used to include the integration of what is apprehended into thought and behavior patterns of the reader.\textsuperscript{19}

Hayakawa has spoken in favor of Leary's point of view that reading implies something more than recognition and pronunciation of words. In \textit{Language in Action}, Hayakawa said that to be able to read and write is to learn to profit by and partake of the greatest of human achievements, namely, the pooling of knowledge and experience into a great cooperative store of race experience which is thereby made available to all. Hayakawa called the ability to read an indispensable achievement of civilized man:

\begin{quote}
The understanding of symbols and of words as a special class of especially subtle and convenient symbols, is basic, then, to sanity and happiness at the human level, and the more advanced civilization becomes, and the more dependent are we on our ability to handle and interpret symbols.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Thus considered, reading clarifies, formulates, and helps

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19]Leary, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 434-35.
\end{footnotes}
to express the ideas which comprise a culture or *zeitgeist*.

Reading is essential to an understanding of the ethos of an age.

Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw presented a similar view of the nature of reading, as they said that "In short, reading is a social process. It relates the reader to his environment, and it conditions that relationship."^21

In *How to Read a Book*, Adler asserted that reading is a basic tool in living a good life. Those who can use reading to learn from books have access to the stores of knowledge. To Adler, reading was the means of acquiring a liberal education, and a liberal education was the means of enriching life. He stated that the art of reading well is intimately related to the art of thinking well—clearly, critically, freely. He defined reading as "the process whereby a mind, with nothing to operate on but symbols of the reading matter, and with no help from the outside, elevates itself by the power of its own operation."^22

This investigator believes that many teachers could

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^22*Mortimer J. Adler, How to Read a Book*, p. 27.
greatly benefit from sober consideration of the wisdom of a statement made by Richards in his book, *How to Read a Page*:

A list of the vices of reading should put first, as worst and most disabling, the expectation that everything should be easily understood. Things worth thought and reflection cannot be taken in at a glance. The writer should, of course, have done his utmost to make things easy for us.... But where there still is some difficulty remaining, let us beware of blaming it on the author rather than on our own imperfect command of the language. To blame the writer will teach us nothing. To wonder if we are reading right may.

From the foregoing statements made by numerous authorities in the field of reading, one discerns that effective reading is purposeful, having personal, social, and cultural value for the reader and for society. The act of reading is not a passive process, being instead an activity in which the reader must react at varying levels to the thoughts imparted by the printed page. Some of the levels on which insightful, perceptive, and sensitive reading operates include full comprehension of the meaning intended by the author, intellectual response, and aesthetic response to the material read. Effective reading enables the reader to distinguish between fact and propaganda, and

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it helps him to resist subtle pressures which may be exerted upon him by vested interests. Since free, uncontrolled communication is the very lifeblood of a republic, the possession of effective reading skills by all citizens is basic to the ideal of democracy itself. In the sense that reading is an economical means of learning and therefore a means the individual uses to become a good citizen, and since it is a significant instrument for self-development, effective reading instruction in the schools is basic to fulfilling the goals of both American high schools and the English programs within those schools.

Before the discussion of the nature of reading is concluded, some limitations of reading should be noted. The great danger in total reliance upon reading as a sole avenue to learning is that of excessive verbalism, or, in Gray's words, "the acceptance of the coin for the things for which the coin stands." Consequently, the ideal educational program should provide some kind of wholesome balance between direct experience of the empirical, sensory kind and abstract or vicarious experience. Reading is a form of experience which contributes to the intellectual and emotional growth of the individual, but it is not an end in itself. No human being can know and experience everything directly; he can, however, through

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the act of reading, travel throughout the world and transcend the limitations of time and space.

What needs to be done about the improvement of instruction in reading. So far as reading at the high-school level is concerned, perhaps the most significant change needed is for the secondary-school teacher to recognize the need for and then to provide continuing instruction in reading for all, or almost all, students. Within recent years there has been a heartening trend in this direction since more and more high-school teachers are attempting to provide reading instruction. The problem remains, however, and still needs the continuing attention of all high-school teachers.

Gray has written numerous articles concerning the kinds of research that are needed in reading. In one article, Gray pointed out that the following areas required additional research:

1. Problems relating to the nature of the reading act
2. Practical issues faced in teaching reading
3. Problems relating to the reader
4. Reading problems at specific levels.\(^{25}\)

Gray raised three questions under the first category listed above—Problems relating to the nature of the reading act.

reading act—which are so central to this entire investigation that they merit particular attention at this point.

Gray asked--

1. **What are the aspects of intelligence that directly influence progress in learning to read and interpreting what is read?**

2. **To what extent can breadth and depth of interpretation in reading be acquired by pupils of varying levels of general mental ability?**

3. **What is the role of imagery in interpreting what is read? How can teachers promote the development of types of imagery essential to clear, vivid, experiencing of meaning when reading?**

In preparing the explications of various literary selections that will comprise the latter portion of this study, this writer will be confronted with the problems raised by Gray which concern breadth and depth of interpretation. The assumptions upon which these exegeses will be based include such concepts of learning as the belief that reading is purposeful, active, and multi-levelled. Reading is regarded as a means of gaining knowledge of the experiences of mankind, both past and present. Reading is considered as a means of helping young people to gain insight into their fellow human beings and themselves as well. Reading should provide vicarious experiences, expand intellectual, cultural, moral, and aesthetic horizons. In preparing the

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26Ibid., p. 101.
explications for this study, the investigator will include analyses that will attempt to meet the foregoing requirements of good reading. By making these exegeses available to both high-school teachers and students, the writer hopes that he may demonstrate some of the possibilities.

In both junior and senior high schools there is urgent need for systematic remedial and developmental reading programs. Emphasis needs to be placed upon remedial programs for those who do not read well, and developmental reading for those students who read at their own age or grade level as determined by diagnostic tests. The ideal toward which high-school teachers should strive is that of having all teachers in the secondary school become teachers of reading. Of course, any such ideal can be achieved only when the whole system of teacher education is reoriented to the extent that all prospective teachers will be given some instruction in the techniques necessary to the teaching of reading.

Witty has indicated what he believes to be the "hallmarks of an effective reading program" which could become the basis for determining what needs to be done in the fields of reading for American secondary schools. Witty's characteristics of an effective reading program are as follows:

1. Every high school teacher is a teacher of reading.
2. Instruction is geared to pupil needs.
3. Every pupil is reached by the program.
4. There is ample supply of appropriate material.
5. The reading program is diversified and well-balanced.
6. Reading experiences are pleasant and inviting.
7. Attention is given to pupil growth in each major phase of reading achievement, especially: greater flexibility in reading habits, greater power of comprehension, growth of pupils' vocabularies; and more efficient use of reading in study situations.
8. Coordinated effort characterizes the reading program.

It may be seen that the proposed literary explications that will comprise the latter portion of this study do conform to Witty's suggestion that an effective reading program is concerned with pupil growth, that it is diversified, and that it stresses growth in comprehension and vocabulary. All of these objectives will be incorporated into the explications for this study.

Summary. The purpose of Chapter IV has been that of examining some of the basic assumptions upon which this study is predicated—that Americans do not read as much, as well, nor as discriminately as they should; that there is need for continued research in the field of reading literature in high schools; and that explication de texte is one means of improving the reading of literature in secondary schools. Research findings were cited in Chapter IV which indicate that 44 per cent of the American people

26Witty, Reading in Modern Education, op. cit., p. 11.
spend no more than one-half hour per week reading books of any kind. Although research reveals that two out of every five adults say reading is their favorite diversion, most people spend more time reading newspapers and magazines than they do reading books. Further evidence of the low state of reading in the United States today was found in the publishers' report that Mickey Spillane is the most widely read author. At the end of 1957, some 40,000,000 copies of the thirty novels written by Spillane had been bought by the American book-buying public.

Numerous definitions of reading were cited. A consensus among various authorities suggests that the act of reading is a complex set of relationships or habits which involve social, cultural, intellectual, emotional, psychological, and aesthetic reactions. Effective and comprehensive reading requires the full operation of all of these responses.

It was stated that in the future high-school teachers need to recognize the necessity for providing continuing reading instruction for all, or almost all, students. Gray and Witty declared that continued research in reading is imperative if maximal reading effectiveness on the part of all students is to be achieved. Reading instruction implies help in the interpretation and analysis of imagery and symbolism. The explications contemplated for this study will be one contribution to an area in research
which Gray indicated as being necessary—interpretation of image and symbol in literature.

Indeed, the whole burden upon which this study is posited is that there exists need for continuing experimentation and research in the field of reading. In Chapter I, this writer proceeded upon the assumption that Americans do not read as much nor as discriminately as an increasingly complex society demands of them. In Chapter IV, the writer cited numerous authorities who confirm the assumptions of Chapter I. Many of the goals of secondary schools established in Chapter II are directly dependent upon the perceptive reading of the printed word by the high-school student. In like manner, many of the objectives of the English program of the secondary school established in Chapter III can be achieved only if adolescents are able to read the printed page with perception and sensitive insight. Since, as was stated in Chapter IV, explication de texte focuses attention upon specific works of literature in an endeavor to help the student read as widely and penetratingly as possible, the writer invites the attention of the reader to a consideration of some of the tools that are necessary and helpful in preparing explications.
CHAPTER V

TOOLS FOR EXPLICATION

To the avowed devotee of the New Criticism, the contents of this chapter, "Tools for Explication," may present something of a paradox. Since the New Criticism usually implies a close reading and analysis of a literary work which is freed from the scholarly impedimenta of schools of influence, biography, sources, and milieu, the presentation of a list of books and sources which is intended to assist English teachers to improve reading literature in high schools by increased use of explication de texte may suggest a dichotomy to some readers. This writer pointed out in Chapter I that the present investigation should not be construed wholly to represent the theories and methods of the New Criticism. In the sense that this investigation is based upon close reading and analysis of literature as a means of total comprehension, it may be said that this study represents the spirit of the New Criticism. Yet this inquiry deviates from the above-mentioned method in that it rests upon the assumption that a work should not be read in a complete vacuum but rather in relation to its zeitgeist. This writer
assumes that the successful teacher of literature needs at his command the accumulated research of centuries of scholarly and critical inquiry. In this sense that the teacher can benefit from any knowledge or insights that are pertinent to a particular work, this chapter that deals with the tools of literary scholarship presents no paradox. The purpose of this chapter to present for the high-school teacher of English a highly selective list of tools which he may find helpful and perhaps indispensable in achieving more effective interpretations of literature in the classroom.

Demands placed upon the teacher of literature. The extent of human letters is so great that no one person can read everything that has been written. Nor can one teacher read everything that has been written in either American or English literature. Consequently, the English teacher, whether he be a veteran of thirty years of classroom teaching or the tyro who is teaching his first English class, is often called upon to give answers or to form value judgments upon matters about which he cannot hope to be familiar. It is reasonable, however, to expect that the teacher will be familiar with some of the standard sources of information which may provide answers to his own questions asked in the process of explicating a work, as well as the questions asked him by his students.
Since some of the literary selections which are read in high-school literature classes deal with past times and past events, the teacher often finds it necessary to have at his command at least a working knowledge of the life and times of the period in which the work was written. Likewise, a comprehensive reading of a contemporary poet such as Robert Frost or Carl Sandburg requires an understanding of the current human scene. Such an obligation all but overwhelms the novice if he has a perceptive mind. Yet, this writer has found such a challenge to be one of the finest motivating forces for constant study in professional life. The teacher who conscientiously strives toward greater understanding of human motivation and human relationship has in a larger sense adopted Goethe's Faustian spirit of ceaseless striving. What can better serve as a life challenge?

**Critical insights derived from use of tools.** Wise and constant use of some of the scholarly tools of explication can provide a teacher with critical insights that will make his teaching more effective and stimulating than it otherwise might be. For example, consider how the meanings of words shift from age to age. When Shakespeare uses the word *presently*, it means "at once," not "by and by" as it may mean today. When he spoke of the *humorous man*, he did not mean the clown of the party or a funny fellow, but he meant instead, the sad, eccentric
man, one in whom **humours** were out of harmony. Or, to consider another instance of shifting meanings of words, observe how social mores alter, and how an understanding of that alteration is necessary if the reader is to comprehend the author's meaning. The reader of **Hamlet** may regard Ophelia as a weak-minded, sniveling puppet. To Shakespeare and his audience Ophelia was an obedient daughter to whom it never occurred to question the will of her father. In a strong patriarchal social system Polonius ruled his daughter with an iron will. Another illustration of the dominant role of the father is seen in **Romeo and Juliet** where Juliet's father arbitrarily arranges for her marriage with County Paris. The contemporary high-school girl must realize that a father's will was law before she can understand the interplay of relationships in father-daughter situations.

One need only look to the past to see how men have erred in critical judgment by not understanding the forces which influenced a writer. For example, in the eighteenth century an English producer rewrote **King Lear** and gave it a "happy" ending. Obviously, such a treatment of Shakespeare reflects a misconception of his tragic sense of the human spectacle. Such an eminent Shakespearean critic as Dr. Samuel Johnson of the eighteenth century censures Shakespeare for not providing a strong moralizing flavor to his plays. An examination of the history of criticism
will reveal that in the eighteenth century many critics thought that literature best served its purpose when it was intensely didactic. Thus, Dr. Johnson erred in imposing his own eighteenth-century standards of literary criticism upon a seventeenth-century playwright. At the same time, Johnson praised Shakespeare highly for his artistic achievements. Shakespeare frequently dealt with a moral problem but he was never didactic. He advocated no creeds, espoused no causes; yet, he was always moral. The teacher who would read and teach Shakespeare with intelligent comprehension must be familiar with the cultural climate of sixteenth and seventeenth-century England.

Some dangers in over-use of tools of explication. In Chapter I of this inquiry the writer was critical of some present practices among teachers of English who rely almost totally upon the study of biography, memory work, oral reading and vocabulary drill rather than upon close reading of literary selections. In proposing some usable tools for explication the writer is well aware of some of the inherent dangers which lie in the overuse of such aids. A partial listing of some of these tools, it will be recalled, included such works as the Oxford Companion to English Literature, Oxford Companion to American Literature, Baugh: A Literary History of England, and Spiller: Literary History of the United States.
The teacher whose primary experience has been in the fields of biography or historical background may place too much emphasis upon these tools. Any tool for explication which this writer discusses in this chapter is regarded only as contributory to more intelligent and sensitive reading of the work under consideration. There exists the very real danger that the teacher who is inclined toward scholarly analysis may gravitate toward the teaching of facts about literature to the neglect of the literature itself.

**Tools for explication.** Admittedly, the following list of tools for explicating is a highly selective one. The list is not intended to provide the research specialist with a complete bibliography. In choosing titles this writer has kept in mind the needs of the high-school teacher. The intent has been that of providing a minimal listing of works which will enable the user to become a more sensitive reader of literature. Many of the titles are inexpensive, paper-bound works which the high-school teacher may find practical to purchase for his own library. True, some of the reference works are too expensive for private ownership, but they might well be added to the school library. The list of tools which follows is germane to the very nature of this study since they can provide the means by which the interested teacher can become a skillful explicator.
Specific Poems


The Well Wrought Urn is a little book which is easily and profitably read. Since it exemplifies the method and spirit of explication de texte, it is a good point of departure for the English teacher or student who would learn the method of close reading and analysis. In The Well Wrought Urn Brooks gives the reader numerous examples of explication, including analyses of poems by Pope, Yeats, Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Milton. A reading of Brook's book not only will provide the teacher with some fine insights into such poems as Pope's The Rape of the Look or Milton's companion pieces, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," but will also acquaint the reader with the method of explication de texte. Brooks is to be regarded as one of the early American pioneers in the New Criticism.


Understanding Poetry is an anthology of poems for college students. Brooks and Warren print the text of some 230 poems and publish analyses of forty-eight of these poems. Although the authors aim at the college
student, many poems analyzed are read today in high schools, and the high-school teacher will do well to familiarize himself with *Understanding Poetry*.


Several of the poems of Matthew Arnold, W. H. Auden, William Blake, Robert Bridges, Robert Browning, William Cullen Bryant, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Hart Crane, Emily Dickinson, and many other poets, are given brief analysis in *Reading Poems*. Similar to, but, not in the opinion of this writer, as valuable as *Understanding Poetry*, *Reading Poems* provides many fine insights into poems that are read in high-school English classes.


*Poetry Explication* is a checklist of interpretation, since 1925, of British and American poems. References to explications are limited, generally, to poems of not more than five hundred lines. No reference is included which does not deal specifically with the interpretation of poems.

*Poetry Explication* is arranged alphabetically by author. For example, if an English teacher planned to read Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" with a class in literature, he could find listed in *Poetry Explication* the titles of articles dealing with this poem as interpreted by various authors.

The authors of *The Case for Poetry* say that the book "is first of all a collection of good poems...." Many poems are treated in the "case" method, in which opposing views concerning the meanings of the poems are printed in order that the reader may weigh the conflicting analyses and then reach his own decision as to what the poem says. *The Case for Poetry* also presents critiques for a number of poems. As a rule, the critiques are analyses which have been published elsewhere. Usually critiques are more intellectually mature and rewarding than are the case studies. The book is arranged alphabetically by author and includes both English and American poems. This writer recommends this work for both the beginning and the veteran English teacher. The book is available in paper binding and is thus inexpensive.

*The Explicator*, started in October, 1942 (Vol. I, No. 1), by G. W. Arms, J. P. Kirby, L. G. Locke, and J. E. Whitesell, is an indispensable tool for *explication de texte*. This monthly publication (nine issues, $2 per year) is inexpensive and provides a constant and cumulative source of interpretation of all types of literature from all nations. In introducing the periodical in October, 1942, the editors said that "*The Explicator* is for those
who like literature. Its province is the literature that everyone knows. Its purpose is to provide a clearinghouse for *explication de texte*.

Justifying the introduction of such a periodical, the editors of *The Explicator* declared that while the pedagogical magazines take for granted that the teacher knows everything except how to teach his subject, the editors of *The Explicator* believe that the "honest instructor" realizes that he cannot answer every question that the students ask him about the meaning of the literary work under consideration. Through the columns of *The Explicator* the teacher may ask help concerning any literary selection or any single line from a selection. This writer is having his own volumes of *The Explicator* bound each two years so that they will be readily available for years to come. With the final number of the journal each year, the subscriber receives an annual index, arranged alphabetically by author of the work concerned. Also, with the index the editors of the journal prepare an annual bibliography of explications that have been published during the year in other scholarly publications.


Because many readers find difficulty in understanding contemporary poetry, this investigator has included *Reading*
Modern Poetry in his list of tools that give specific analyses of particular poems. It contains not only a collection of contemporary poems, but also a considerable number of critical explanations of poems. The analyses are intended to help the reader comprehend the works of leading contemporary poets. The editors of Reading Modern Poetry say in the Preface that they believe that students will become better readers of poetry if they have been given the opportunity to see and to read critical analyses of specific poems. The explications are intended to create a sense of how poetry works, of why the poet uses rhythm, figures of speech, and understatement. Poems are arranged in an order running generally from the simple to the more difficult, with the explanations also becoming more extensive as the poems become more complex. English and American poems are included without regard for any collection or organization of poems by British or American authors.

As an example of the level of poetry included in Reading Modern Poetry, the cognoscenti will recognize that Engle and Carrier provide the English teacher with a challenge in an explication of Hart Crane's "Lachrymae Christi." Another contemporary poem, Wallace Stevens' "Study of Images I," is analyzed. The first poet whose work appears in Reading Modern Poetry is Robert Frost, followed by James Joyce, A. E. Housman, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Vachel Lindsay.
Reference Tools


The Oxford Companion to American Literature is a convenient, quick source of information about American authors and their works as well as the American mind and the American scene. Arranged alphabetically, the work includes short biographies and bibliographies of American authors. The work contains about nine hundred summaries and descriptions of American novels, stories, essays, poems, and dramas. Included are definitions, historical outlines, awards, and information on magazines.

The last section of this work is devoted to a chronological index which presents the literary events of a given year and in opposite columns the events of social history. This index is helpful in making it possible to associate literary events with the non-literary happenings of the age. For example, Hart shows that in 1851 Melville's Moby Dick, Hawthorne's The House of Seven Gables, and Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" were published and Horace Greeley said, "Go West, young man"; in the same year Maine became the first "dry" state and Northwestern University was founded.


This volume briefly covers significant events of English literature for a period of more than a thousand years, from
the beginnings to the present day. Two main elements are included in alphabetical arrangement. First, there is a list of English authors, literary works, and literary societies. Under an author's name there is given a selection of facts--especially dates--bearing on his life and literary activities. Under the title of a work there is a concise statement of its nature, and for the "greater works of fiction"--whether poetry, prose, or drama--there is usually a brief sketch of the plot or theme.

The second aspect of the work which makes it a worthwhile reference source for the teacher is the explanation of allusions commonly met with, or likely to be met with in English literature. Explanations are limited to allusions which contain a proper name. There are some literary terms and some slang terms explained. For example, the term, Mrs. Grundy, is explained as "The symbol of conventional propriety." She was a character in the play by Thomas Morton (1764?-1838), *Speed the Plough* (1798).

High-school students often develop a healthy interest in literary characters and figures. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* is a rich source of material which can be used to motivate such interest. A "Perpetual Calendar" is included in the work. Occasionally questions concerning Old Style and New Style dates arise in literature classes when students read *Beowulf*, and fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth-century writers. Harvey gives
parallel dates for New and Old Style.

Some literary allusions to regnal years of a particular monarch are explained, as Harvey includes the regnal years from 1066, William I, to 1936, Edward VIII. For example, Elizabeth I died in the forty-fifth year of her reign, while Queen Victoria died in the sixty-fourth regnal year. Harvey includes a table covering movable feast days which are governed by Easter, and a table setting forth fixed feast days. For example, John Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" (1819) begins on St. Agnes' Eve, or January 20.


This work gives a panoramic view of the literatures of the world. Not counting minor dialects, men have spoken in some three thousand tongues. The first recorded literature goes back about five thousand years, according to Shipley.

In these two volumes there is presented an historical survey of the literatures of the world, beginning with "Accadian" and ending with "Yugoslav" literature. Near the end of Volume two (p. 1055) is a section called "Biographical Notices," containing short accounts of the lives of the leading authors of the world.

This dictionary of literary criticism presents definitions of terms, forms, techniques, schools, and movements. It does not deal with literary works themselves.

This work is erudite and profound, being written by numerous authorities in specific fields. English teachers who wish to go beyond superficial definitions and discussions of terms will find this book helpful.


This reference tool is an alphabetically arranged encyclopedia of information about books, authors, and the historical background of the books ranging from the time of Homer to the present day. While *The Reader's Companion to World Literature* presents the plots of only a limited number of the world's major literary works, it discusses in some detail the content, style, importance, and relationship to other works of literature of many of the most memorable literary compositions of the world. The work provides background materials that lend insight and understanding to works written in times past and in distant lands.

First entry in *The Reader's Companion* is "Abelard, Peter," a theologian, poet, and teacher (1079-1142) of the Middle Ages. Abelard's work as a theologian is described, and a paragraph is devoted to a discussion of the love of Abelard for Heloise. Almost four pages are devoted to a
discussion of another of the world's great love affairs, Tristan and Isolt. About four pages are devoted to a discussion of Shakespeare. In the opinion of this writer, this work is particularly strong and valuable in its treatment of the outstanding dramas of world literature. Dramatists discussed include Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides, Chekhov, Ibsen, and O'Neill. Such contemporary American dramatists as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are not discussed. Since this work currently is priced at seventy-five cents, it provides the happy combination of economy with utility.


For the high-school English teacher who wishes to build his own library, this work has the advantage of being readable, scholarly, portable, and inexpensive. It is a concise cyclopedia of literary facts and terminology, biographical data, and brief, critical evaluations. The book is divided into five parts, as follow:

1. Dictionary of authors
2. List of anonymous works
3. Glossary of literary terms
4. Notes on versification
5. Chronological chart

Authors include scientific and philosophical writers such as Charles Darwin, William Harvey, Sir Isaac Newton,
and Adam Smith. Of Chaucer the authors say, "England's first major poet."—p. 60. Of William Shakespeare the authors begin by saying, "The first name in English literature is that of an Elizabethan poet and dramatist whose skill in transforming human character and action into art created a world of unforgettable people and phrases."—p. 246.

**College Outline Series**


The Outline-History gives a brief account of historical developments which occurred during a literary period and then treats major and minor writers and their works during each literary period. For each author included in the volumes, a brief biographical sketch is given, followed by a listing and summary of his work. Dates of publication for works are provided and a brief critical estimate of merits and defects of the works is given.


*An Outline-History of American Literature follows the general plan described above for English literature.*

_A Pronouncing Dictionary of Shakespearean Proper Names_ solves the difficulties encountered by the high-school English teacher in pronouncing proper names which occur in the poet's dramas. Since no official guide is given as to how the names were pronounced at the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, the dictionary gives the pronunciations used by leading Shakespearean actors, accrediting to each character's name the phonetic spelling as employed by a given actor. Since many proper names in Shakespeare are Italian or French, the teacher who is unskilled in foreign languages will find help in this dictionary.


Because of the language problems encountered in Renaissance diction many high-school students have difficulty following the plot thread in Shakespearean plays. By reading the act-by-act account of the story in the College-Outline Series publication, the student can derive enhanced enjoyment from his study of Shakespeare. This writer has frequently read aloud in class the brief prose account of an act from a Shakespearean drama just prior to beginning a close reading of the work with the class.

In recent years there has been a growing tendency on the part of publishers of English literary anthologies at the high-school level to incorporate increasing amounts of literature from countries other than England and America. The inclusion of authors, both ancient and modern, from other lands, places new responsibilities upon the English teacher. World Literature, of the College-Outline Series, will be most helpful in making Homer, Sappho, and other figures in world literature more easily and more fully understood. Volume I contains accounts of works from Greek, Roman, Oriental, and Medieval classics. Beginning with an early Egyptian work, "The Precepts of Ptahhoter," dated circa 2500 B.C., this first volume includes biographies, background discussion, synopses, and descriptions of the Greek and Roman classics, coming down to and including Dante's Divine Comedy (1300). The discussion of both Indian and Chinese literature is excellent and rewarding.


Volume II of this title under the College-Outline Series begins with the Italian Renaissance, starting with Petrarch, and deals with French, Spanish, German, and Russian writers and their works. For each literary period or movement, Trawick supplies a scholarly, lively discussion
of background material. The teacher of American or English literature in high school will find Trawick's discussion of the rise of the romantic movement and the growth and development of literary naturalism informative and challenging. As with all of the College-Outline Series listed above, these paperbound books are inexpensive.

**Literary Histories**


Among literary scholars at present, this history of English literature is regarded as the definitive work. In the preface Baugh points out that he attempts to present a comprehensive history of the literature of England in this work, an account that is at once scholarly and readable, capable of meeting the needs of students and of appealing to cultivated readers generally.

The scope of English literature is so vast that no one can hope to read more than a fraction of it. The accumulated scholarly writing—biographical, critical, and historical—by which writers and their works and the forms and movements and periods of English literature have been interpreted, is so extensive that no one scholar can hope to know all of it. Thus, for the high-school teacher who is called upon to teach literary selections from *Beowulf* to W. H. Auden, Baugh is helpful for his critical evaluations, his insights into a period, and his comments on the
position occupied by writers both past and present.

Arrangement of the work is chronological. Bibliographies are placed at the bottoms of the pages of the text.


Spiller's Literary History of the United States occupies in American literature the same relative position as the Baugh work holds in English literature, the acknowledged, definitive literary history of American letters at present. Baugh and Spiller are invaluable tools for the high-school English teacher who desires to move in the direction of explication de texte. Every first-class high-school library should have copies of these two literary histories as part of its reference shelf.

In the preface, Spiller says that each generation should produce at least one literary history of the United States, for each generation must define the past in its own terms. At mid-point, the twentieth century may properly establish its own criteria of literary judgment; indeed, the values as well as the facts of modern civilization must be examined if man is to escape self-destruction.

Intellectual currents and forces that have shaped American civilization, the record of those currents and forces as seen in the works of American writers, and the
lives of these authors are dealt with in Spiller. The general arrangement is from broad subjects of intellectual and historic development to specific authors who contributed to the development. Full chapters are devoted to the major authors.

The third volume of Spiller is devoted to bibliographies. There are general bibliographies covering movements and periods. Major authors and their works are covered in separate bibliographies for each author. Bibliographies are arranged by genre, by literary periods, and by author. Of particular value to the high-school English teacher are bibliographies on folk literature, songs and ballads, humor, and Indian lore. There are bibliographical sections dealing with popular literature, best sellers, dime novels, detective stories, and juvenile literature. The work is collaborative in nature, each chapter being written by an acknowledged authority in his field. Authors of the separate chapters of the work are identified.

Summary. In Chapter V, "Tools for Explication," a minimal list of sources of information concerning American, English, and world literature has been suggested for the high-school English teacher who would master explication de texte as a means of improving the reading of literature in American secondary schools. The writer justified the presentation of such a list of tools by pointing out that the English teacher is called upon to answer questions
covering the range of human letters, an area which no person can hope to know in its entirety. The writer has assumed that literature cannot be taught in a vacuum. Therefore, the list of tools for explication that has been presented in this chapter is a partial answer to assisting teachers to become more conversant with the social, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic forces which have shaped the outlook of writers in given periods. The writer has pointed to some of the dangers in overuse of critical studies and reference work, that danger being defined as the tendency on the part of some teachers to substitute the search for isolated facts about literature for perceptive and insightful reading. This investigator considers these tools as a means to an end, not the ends in and of themselves.

In turning to Chapter VI, "Explications of Selected Poems," this investigator calls the attention of the reader to the discussion of explication de texte in Chapter I of this study. Explication was defined as "the examination of a work of literature for a knowledge of each part, for the relations of these parts to each other, and for their relations to the whole." The writer also pointed out in Chapter I that he held no brief for or against the literary selections that will provide the objects of study in the remainder of this thesis. Upon examination of six sets of literature anthologies currently in use in the nation's high schools, the investigator tabulated selections that were
common to most or all of the various anthologies. At the same time, the writer listed some not-so-common selections in order to provide new and fresh literary materials for the English teacher.

In this writer's experience and in the experience of other teachers with whom he has consulted, the explications which are to follow in subsequent chapters may be used in two primary ways. The teacher or student who is unfamiliar with the method of explication de texte may find that a reading of all of the explications may provide him with fresh insights into literature. For the teacher with some experience in explicating poems, reference to a particular selection may supply increased understanding of the work, or it may serve as a review. For this reason, the works explicated in Chapter VI have been arranged alphabetically by author.
ARNOLD, MATTHEW. DOVER BEACH (1867). At the primary, most elemental level of reading "Dover Beach" begins with a statement by the poet that certain physical conditions—"calm sea," "full tide," "fair moon," and "sweet night air,"—indicate that the world is at peace. So beautiful are the cliffs of England and the French coast, which is visible in the moonlight (some twenty miles away), that the poet bids an unidentified person come to the window to join him in enjoying the beautiful scene.

Only six lines of the poem have been read, however, before the reader is told by Arnold that external, or surface conditions, may not be relied upon entirely. Presumably, by looking and listening more intently than he had at first done, Arnold notes that "Where the sea meets the moon-blanchéd land" you hear a grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

In the first stanza of fourteen lines the poet presents a paradox that in the world which outwardly seems so
beautiful and lovely there are forces of harsh discord.\textsuperscript{1} Too, Arnold tells his reader that in the natural ebb and flow of waves, as they restlessly, yet rhythmically and undulatingly rise and fall along the strand there is an eternal note of sadness. Sophocles heard the same sound on the Aegean long ago. To this Greek poet and tragedian (ca. B.C. 495-406), the "eternal not of sadness" suggested "the turbid ebb and flow/ Of human misery." Like Sophocles, who heard the sound of waves more than two thousand years before, Arnold finds in the sound a thought. The poet then proceeds to tell his reader that the thought which comes to his mind as he contemplates the human scene, England of mid-nineteenth century, is that "The Sea of Faith/ Was once, too, at the full," and encircled the earth like a bright girdle. The faith which once supported mankind is receding with a "melancholy, long withdrawing roar" to the very edges of the earth. Without the support of faith, men's lives are as exposed as the "naked shingles of the world." Without doubt, Arnold uses the word shingles to denote the loose pebbles on the beach which are tossed about by the waves as they restlessly rise and fall along the beach. In such a condition mankind is thus unprotected. What hope does the poet see for man?

\textsuperscript{1}Frederick L. Gwynn, "Arnold's 'Dover Beach,'" \textit{The Explicator}, VIII (April, 1950), Item 46.
Arnold tells his reader that the only hope in such a world of despair as he envisions is that of human love and its ameliorating effect upon mankind. He says, "Ah, love, let us be true/ To one another!" Why does Arnold make this appeal for human love, understanding, and trust? The answer is soon given when the poet repeats his earlier observation that external appearance is not to be accepted as representative of the whole truth when he declares:

...for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Externally, then, the world is full of promise and hope, yet, Arnold says, when man looks beneath the surface, there is really little hope. At the literal level, the above commentary is a fairly complete prose paraphrase of "Dover Beach" as a poetic communication. Beyond the literal level of meaning, however, Arnold adds yet another dimension in his skillful use of historical allusion, combined with his artistic employment of imagery and symbolism.

Arnold begins the poem with a concrete observation, his impression of Dover Beach at night in the moonlight.

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Then he moves to reflection upon an historical figure, the Greek poet-tragedian, Sophocles, who, likewise, stood by the seashore and saw the human plight. From this literal and historical level of meaning, Arnold then moves to the level of the abstract when he speaks of "The Sea of Faith." What did Arnold mean by "The Sea of Faith," and what forces influenced him to believe that this "Sea of Faith" was withdrawing and retreating? The answer is given in the poem, or at least it is partially given in the poet's assertion that in the world there is no certitude, no joy, no love, no peace, no light, and no help for pain. A reading of Arnold's essays and letters indicates his painful awareness of the loss of faith in eternal verities in his own day which resulted from the rise of science and scientific attitudes. Arnold was intensely aware of the impact which Darwin's Origin of the Species (1859) had upon man's faith in the Biblical account of the origin of man as recorded in Genesis. For Arnold and for millions of others throughout the Western world, the impact of scientific materialism upon certitude and faith in eternal verities resulted in disillusion and cynicism, the kind which is expressed so movingly in the closing lines of "Dove Beach" quoted above.

In a world in which Arnold finds that there is no

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3 For an interpretation of "Dover Beach" as a love poem, see Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold, pp. 110-41.
faith to bind men together, where the law of the jungle prevails, where men live in isolation from one another, where no consistent principle of order is found, what hope is there for the individual? Arnold says that there is left only human love, human understanding, human fellowship. The despair and disillusion of "Dover Beach" indicate a world weariness, a hopelessness which typifies the age.

What about "Dover Beach" as an aesthetic creation? What images, what symbols run through the poem? In "Dover Beach" Arnold employs some of his favorite poetic images—water and land, darkness and light, human conflict on the plain, sea of life, and now the sea of faith. Sea images occur time and again in Arnold's poetry. While poets have long used the sea as a metaphor, the images of the ebb and flow of human misery and the ebb and flow of human faith are consistent, economical, and imaginative. Arnold relies upon images which appeal to the sense of hearing—"grating roar" and "sound." He uses images of sight—"gleams," "glimmering," and "light." He appeals to the sense of smell in the image, "sweet is the night air!" In a world where faith buoys the human spirit there is light, but in the absence of faith there is the "darkling plain." Light becomes an image suggestive of understanding, insight, and learning. In the absence of light there is only darkness
and confusion where "ignorant armies clash by night."
Arnold's use of the image of water encircling the earth
and of water as a symbol of faith that buoys man is con­
sistent and in accordance with the physical facts of the
world.

"Dover Beach" was published in the collection of
poems which appeared in 1867. In the succeeding years,
for many millions of men throughout the world, faith has
continued to ebb and flow and ignorant armies have con­
tinued to clash on the "darkling plain." Some men have
found in their religion a principle of order which Arnold
sought; others have turned to the totalitarian state for
a unifying principle. Possibly, in the larger sense, the
struggle between East and West is a conflict for the control
of men's mind's with each side offering its own way for
bringing order and direction out of the chaos.

Auden, Wystan Hugh. The Unknown Citizen (1940). In
this striking poem, which is a brief biography of the face­
less citizen of the bureaucratic state, Auden shows insight
into one of the growing problems of the twentieth century--
how can man participate in society and not lose his personal
identity? Auden identifies his subject only by the ini­
tials, "To JS/07/M378." His citizen had no personal life,
and he obeyed the state; Auden says that "He was found by
the Bureau of Statistics to be/ One against whom there was
no official complaint." In a bureaucratic state "The Unknown Citizen" is regarded as the ideal man. He was in all ways a complete conformist:

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

This citizen was a member of the "right" union and the reports indicate that his union met with the approval of the state. Social psychology workers found that the citizen was "adjusted," inasmuch as he was "popular with his mates and liked a drink."4 "The Unknown Citizen" was insured, held a proper health card, reacted to advertisements in a "normal" way, and most important of all,

He was fully sensible of the advantages of the Installment Plan.

Auden's satirical wit is quite in evidence in the line in which he says of "The Unknown Citizen," that he

...had everything necessary to the Modern Man, A phonograph, a radio, a car, and a frigidaire.

This view of the needs of modern man presents him as completely materialistic. One of Auden's most penetrating insights into the faceless men who make up a bureaucratic state is found in the line in which he says that the state's researchers into public opinion are content

4Rica Brenner, Poets of Our Time, pp. 245-77.
That he held the proper opinions for the time of the year.

The minds of the citizens of Auden's imaginary state are so controlled and so dependent upon the state that they think the "right" thoughts at the proper season of the year. "The Unknown Citizen" was so completely submissive to the will of the state that he never interfered with the education of his five children. The state beneficently acknowledged that his five children were just the "right" number for a parent of his generation. Auden's final thrust of satire emerges in the conclusion:

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd: Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

Auden never speaks out directly against the complacency, the self-deception, the unawareness of the citizens of a state who will permit themselves to be so enslaved. The poet achieves his purpose by his use of wit and satire, thus revealing the tragedy he discerns and the pity he feels for the citizen in the bureaucratic state. Presumably, Auden believes that to draw the portrait of the unknown citizen is tantamount to warning any reader intelligent enough to understand his poems that he needs to beware

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that this shall not happen to him. Or, if enslavement is already a fact, it is time to strike the chains from the feet. ⁶

"The Unknown Citizen" is remindful of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), a novel in which the author presents the queerly, though believably, distorted society of Oceania where thought is controlled by the state. Orwell's "Big Brother" state easily could be the kind of state in which "The Unknown Citizen" lives. Indeed, were the unknown citizen given a name, he might be called Winston Smith, Orwell's hero in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Auden's point of view in "The Unknown Citizen" is not that of an introspective soul who lays bare his own emotions. It is rather that of the liberal thinker who sees a world of men and women, a world that is harsh and cruel, one that has been made so by perverted wills of human beings. The world envisioned by Auden is one which is destined to collapse unless there is individual and mass moral regeneration. As a poet-satirist, Auden deals with a world in which "The Unknown Citizen" is entirely possible and frighteningly believable. There is no doubt from the tone of the poem that Auden regards this world as morally wrong. By the use of wit and satire in exposing the insanity of this world,

Auden, it is to be presumed, would lead men to avoid the kind of world in which the unknown citizen lives.

Blake, William. The Tiger (1794). Any approach to a reading of William Blake's "The Tiger" should first of all take into consideration that there are six stanzas of four lines each, with the sixth stanza being a repetition, except for one word, of the first stanza. Also, it should be observed that the six stanzas of the poem are actually a series of questions which the poet raises.

Blake addresses the tiger as if it were a bright flame in "the forest of the night." At its most elemental level the tiger is bright in color, and when angered its eyes may be said to "burn" with destructive force. "Forests of the night" may be interpreted to mean a literal forest or jungle wherein the tiger lives. At a figurative level the poet's use of "forests of the night" may be construed to mean the world. Blake asks the question, "What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" There is the assumption on the part of the poet that the tiger is created by some "immortal" force operating in the universe. By "fearful symmetry" Blake may mean that the tiger is an animal of stealth, grace, rhythm, and coordination. If the tiger is a symbol of the evil that exists in the world, as Blake implies in the poem, then within evil itself there is a certain kind of beauty, perhaps even a quality of grace.
Nonetheless, the tiger is a "fearful" thing, as Blake tells his reader.

It is Blake's use of the word frame that supplies the poem with its central image. To frame means to shape or to mould. Blake suggests the poetic image of a heavenly blacksmith who forges the tiger. He asks the question, what kind of celestial being is it that would dare frame such a thing of ferocity and evil as the tiger? In stanza two Blake asks "In what distant deeps or skies/ Burnt the fire of thine eyes?" Where did the eyes of the tiger burn before the immortal hand framed them? Possibly there is the hint here that Blake wonders whether or not the eyes of the tiger, with their burning aspect of evil, may have had a prior cosmic existence. The second question asked in stanza two has an echo of the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus. Blake asks:

On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

What source of energy or power was used by the divine blacksmith in framing a thing so evil as the tiger? In Blake's use of the word wings there is a possible reference to the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus, a myth which concerns aspiration and the tragic results of headstrong, willful

action. Daedalus fashioned wings of wax for himself and his son so that they might fly into the heavens. Daedalus warned his son, Icarus, not to fly too near the sun for fear that the heat might melt the wax which held the wings together. Icarus, refusing to obey his father, flew upward nearer and nearer to the sun. The wax melted and he fell to the earth. In a symbolic sense, Icarus aspired to know the source of light, of vital energy and he was destroyed by his aspiration.\footnote{Robert O. Bowen, "The Tiger," The Explicator, VII (June, 1949), Item 39.} Blake wonders if the celestial blacksmith, in creating the tiger, has come too near to knowing the divine truth.

Blake continues the poetic image of the divine blacksmith in stanza three when he says:

> And what shoulder, and what art?  
> Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

The shoulder image is that of a celestial being, working at his anvil, hammering out the shape and form of the tiger. The poet continues his metaphor into the fourth stanza with references to the hammer, the furnace, and the anvil, asking all the while, who could frame this fearful thing? Blake then goes one step further in developing his image when he asks:
When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

While the first line of the stanza presents many problems of interpretation, one possible way of regarding the line is that Blake is suggesting that the heavenly blacksmith enlisted the assistance of the rays of light from the actual stars when he formed the tiger. Shafts of light from the sparks which fell from the anvil could be compared with the rays of light which come from the stars. When a blacksmith strikes hot metal with his hammer, sparks do shower from the metal. The poetic image is heightened when one recalls that the tears which were shed by the stars, when they saw what had been accomplished, could serve to temper the tiger metal. Hot metal is dipped into water as a means of making the metal hard. The tiger, a symbol of evil, is not only tempered by the tears shed by the stars when they perceive what has been wrought, but the evil in the world has been the cause of tears that have been shed by mankind in all ages.9 Blake's most penetrating and most-difficult-to-answer question is asked when he inquires:

Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Of course, the poet suggests no answer to this question. Perhaps there is no answer to it. Yet, in understanding the question and its full implications, the reader gains new insight and increased understanding of the possibilities of good and evil as forces which operate in the world. According to the Christian concept, God is a kind, loving father. Blake raises the question, is it an act of kindness on the part of Him Who made the Lamb, or Christ, also to create the tiger, or evil? One interpretation of "The Tiger" is that this poem presents the problem of reconciling the forgiveness of sin (the Lamb) with the punishment of sin (the Tiger). Some critics have said that Blake is trying to account for the creation of evil in the world. Others have said that Blake is dealing with the primary force and energy of nature, represented by the destructive power of the tiger. This writer believes that Blake was striving to find some means reconciling the presence of good and evil in the world. He Who made the tiger also made the lamb. Evil, then, must have some positive force in the world. Perhaps this is the insight that readers of "The Tiger" derive from a reading of this significant poem.

10 Mark Schorer, William Blake, p. 250.

Browning, Robert. My Last Duchess (1842). Browning generally is credited with having brought the dramatic monologue to its highest perfection. "My Last Duchess" affords the explicator with an excellent example of this literary form. A dramatic monologue is usually a poem in which the spokesman reveals himself and others by what he says. Since human character is revealed through the speaker's words, the successful dramatic monologue usually gives the reader a perceptive understanding of human psychology. Browning found the dramatic monologue suitable to his own poetic inclination and used the method frequently. Some examples of his use of the form are "My Last Duchess," "Andrea del Sarto," and "Fra Lippo Lippi." The speaker usually has a listener who actually contributes little to the development of the poem, except in the role of listener. In "My Last Duchess" the Duke of Ferrara is speaking and his auditor is an envoy from the count whose daughter the Duke seeks to marry. It may be noted in passing that in the poem, "Andrea del Sarto," Browning uses the same technique as he does in "My Last Duchess"; in "Andrea" the speaker is the painter, Andrea, while the listener is his wife, Lucrezia.

Browning became interested in Italy and devoted much time to the study of the Italian Renaissance, and he uses

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this as the setting for "My Last Duchess." The Duke of Ferrara is speaking as the poem begins. It is soon evident that the Duke is showing a visitor his art objects, including a painting of his last Duchess. His appreciation for the painting is revealed in the lines in which he declares:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

In these opening lines of the poem, Browning shows the Duke as a man who is interested in the painting as an art object, not necessarily as a painting of his former Duchess. The Duke explains to his listener how Fra Pandolf painted the portrait. The work of the imaginary artist-monk was so skillful that the Duke not only admires his artistic creation, but he marvels at it, calling it "a wonder."13

The Duke asks his visitor to sit and admire the work. He then tells his caller that he intentionally mentioned Fra Pandolf, the imaginary artist. It is in his reference to Fra Pandolf that the Duke first begins to reveal his true nature. First, the Duke explains that no one is permitted to draw the curtain which covers the painting of the Duchess but himself. He is seen as a man of property who rules his house with a firm hand. The Duke then tells his listener

that the envoy is not the first to marvel at the look which Fra Pandolf captured on the face of the Duchess. The Duke says:

Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only that called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat."

The Duke's remarks concerning the "spot of joy" can be interpreted in two ways. First, the Duke may mean that his wife was flirtatious and that when men, even a Catholic cleric, paid her small attentions she reacted to these attentions more fully and responsively than a devoted wife should. A second way of regarding the Duke's remark is that the Duchess was a warm, sympathetic, outgoing woman who was no more than casually friendly with the monk-artist. Browning's genius for the Italian Renaissance is reflected in the strict adherence to decorum which he has the artist maintain in addressing the Duchess, always speaking to her in the third person, a gesture of deference to her superior social position. Also, the third person hints at the completely impersonal attitude the monk takes toward the Duchess, thus refuting the Duke's implied jealousy. The artist is a connoisseur of beauty, is complimentary to the Duchess' beauty when he tells her he can never hope to capture the "faint half-flush that dies along her throat." The Duke
reveals his pride and selfishness when he says that the Duchess smiled upon other men and was pleasant to them.

Browning's skill in having his characters reveal themselves by what they say is seen to great advantage when he has the Duke say of the Duchess:

She had

A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked what'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Although the Duke will soon assert that he has no skill in self-expression, his description of the Duchess and her warmth, her human sympathy, is concise and deft. Her heart was too soon made glad, it seemed to her proud, selfish, cold, arrogant husband. The writer believes that Browning shows the Duke as resentful of and jealous of the Duchess' human kindness and warmth. He says that she lacked the restraint, the aloofness which the Duke practiced and which he wanted his wife to practice.

Another fine insight is given not only into the Duke's character but into the social mores of the Italian Renaissance when the Duke says:

Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule She rode with round the terrace---

The Duke uses the word favor, presupposing that any attentions he may deign to give his wife would be his favor. Obviously,
this attitude reflects the social system in which the husband is clearly dominant in marriage, as well as revealing a proud husband. The Duke's accusation that she regarded a sunset, a bough of cherries, or her mule as highly as himself is ridiculous to say the least. Had the Duke accused the Duchess of infidelity or adultery his case would have been valid and perhaps justified. His super ego would not even allow his wife to enjoy a sunset without resenting her action.

Even though the Duke reveals his desire to correct the Duchess in the errors which he alleges that she commits, he cannot and will not correct her, because he felt that to do so would be stooping and he did not choose to stoop. He was, after all, a man with a nine-hundred-year-old name. Finally, in the climax of the poem, the Duke reveals himself completely as a heartless and arrogant tyrant when he says:

Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
When'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive.

The Duke in all his vainglorious pride could not tolerate his wife's friendliness with others. He could be jealous and resentful even of a smile. Then Browning's genius for compression is seen in the Duke's cold assertion, "I gave commands." Perhaps he had the Duchess poisoned, or possibly he may have had her confined for life in a convent, shut up from the world she so loved.
The Duke's extreme politeness and deference toward the Count's envoy reveals a significant facet of his character. Where it does not count much, and in observance of form, the Duke is all compliance, all politeness. With his wife he was not so thoughtful, so courteous. With this emissary, his social inferior, he is all deference. After all, he is arranging the details for the acquisition of another piece of valuable property, a new Duchess. The Duke tells the envoy that even though his first concern is the Count's daughter, he is confident that a suitable dowry will of course be arranged by the Count.

As the two prepare to descend the stair, the Duke reveals his pseudo and empty adherence to form when he says:

Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Presumably, the envoy has stepped back to permit the Duke to precede him down the staircase. The Duke, all show, all conformity, insists that they descent together as equals. As they pass down the stairs, they see a statue, another art object in which the Duke takes great pride. The work is said by the Duke to have been cast by Claus of Innsbruck. Claus is a fictitious sculptor. Innsbruck, an Austrian city, is famed for its bronze statuary. The statue represents Neptune, Roman god of the sea, taming a seahorse, a legendary
monster with the tail of a fish. Here Browning provides his reader with yet another stroke of poetic genius. Although nothing is said by the Duke, is there not the strong suggestion that he is a kind of Neptune and that he will tame his new Duchess in like manner to that of Neptune, or else there will be another last Duchess painting on the wall. The Duke tells the envoy that the statue is thought a rarity, revealing his own interest in art objects.

A careful reading of the poem from the point of view that the Duke is an honorable, admirable, loving and thoughtful husband who was much misunderstood by his wife, although certainly untenable in the light of the facts of the poem, will provide teacher and students with a stimulating exercise in sensing the tone of a poem and in arriving at the meaning intended by the poet.

**Browning, Robert. Prospice (1864).** In the opening words of "Prospice" Browning asks why one should fear death, as if he were surprised that anyone should be afraid to die. In this short poem Browning reveals much of his personal faith and belief in immortality. He describes death as it approaches, and then tells the reader that "the strong man must go." Yet, he says that he was ever a fighter, so his struggle with death will be another battle, the best and the last. Browning asks that he be permitted to taste the full of death, like the heroes of old. Browning employs such phrases to describe death as "the fog in my throat,"
"the mist in my face," "the Arch Fear," and "the elements' rage." Each of these images of death is suggestive of the strife of the soul at the moment of death--the struggle between life and death. For Browning, however, death has no horror. For him death shall be a peace out of pain,

Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

For Browning there need be no maudlin wringing of the hands at the approach of death. Death for him shall be a moment of release.

The word *prospice* comes from the Latin, and means "Look forward." Since the poem was written in the autumn following the death of the poet's wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the last lines of the poem take on added significance. Browning expresses the strong faith that he will clasp his wife again. The rest he will leave with God. Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar" (q.v.) provides a markedly different view of death from that which is expressed in "Prospice." For Tennyson, death is not one battle more. He sees death as a moment of quiet when he hopes to meet his Pilot face to face. Both poems, however, voice a strong faith in immortality.

Bryant, William Cullen. *To a Waterfowl* (1818).14

Bryant observes that certain flight of a waterfowl and

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draws from his observation the lesson that the same force which guides the bird also directs human affairs. Bryant has been watching the flight of a waterfowl; he has observed its sure, unerring flight. As a result of his experience, the poet raises certain questions concerning the waterfowl and its destination.

The poem begins with the word *whither*, suggesting that the poet will employ archaic diction in his poem. There then follows a poetic image that may seem hackneyed and trite. Bryant says:

> Whither, midst falling dew  
> While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,

The poet's use of the word *heavens* is suggestive of his own and the generally accepted outlook of the romantic movement that there is a God in the universe who is concerned with human affairs. The poetic image, "with the last steps of day," suggests a personification of day as if the day were walking toward the end, taking its final steps at sundown. Even though the image was neither new nor fresh in 1818, experience has taught this writer that high-school students today may find the image particularly poetic and meaningful. The image is simple, economical, and true-to-life.

In the first quatrain, written in alternate rhyme, Bryant asks of the waterfowl its destination. In the second stanza the poet observes that the hunter is powerless to harm the bird. In the third stanza Bryant asks if the
waterfowl is seeking the "plashy brink/ Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,/ Or where the rocking billows rise and sink/ On the chafed ocean-side." In stanza four Bryant draws his conclusion that the bird is guided by a Power which directs its path. The bird is traveling alone, but it is not lost. In the fifth stanza the reader is told that although the bird has been flying all day, it stoops not, weary to the welcome land. In the sixth stanza the poet imagines that the waterfowl shall soon find a summer home and build a "sheltered nest." In the seventh stanza the poet says, "Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven/ Hath swallowed up thy form." From his experience, however, the poet says that he has learned a lesson, expressed in stanza eight:

He, who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

For the young reader, for the inexperienced reader, Bryant's didactic and concluding quatrain is likely to be quite meaningful and true. This writer has learned through experience in teaching this poem that the teacher who would take his students beyond "To a Waterfowl" to a more sophisticated poetic taste, will do well to help them come to a full understanding of this poem. To attack the poem as trite, sentimental, didactic, unrealistic, and archaic in thought would be to alienate the inexperienced reader and thus prevent him
from moving on to better poetry. This is not to say, of course, that the teacher should not feel free to point out the apparent weaknesses of "To a Waterfowl." At the same time, the writer has found that for many high-school and college students whom he has taught, the lessons of the poem are true, morally sound, artistically consistent, and are not be tampered with.  

Bryant, William Cullen. Thanatopsis (1821). For the title of this poem Bryant chose a combination of Greek words which means "a view of death." The theme of the poem is the power of nature to heal the chafed and narrow soul. Bryant says that "To him who in the love of nature holds/ Communion with her visible forms," nature speaks a various language. For his gay hours nature speaks with a voice of gladness, a smile, and an eloquence of beauty; for his "darker musings" nature provides a mild and healing sympathy.  

Bryant describes death in such terms as "the last bitter hour," "the stern agony," and "breathless darkness." When thoughts of death cause one to shudder and "grow sick at heart," Bryant advises that one should

Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around--


\[16\] Arms, op. cit., p. 220.
Earth and her still waters, and her depths of air—
Comes a still voice:—

The remainder of the poem is comprised of what Bryant imaginatively hears the "still voice" saying. To Bryant the voice is that of nature which comforts all who live and who soon will die. Completion of the life cycle is envisioned by Bryant when he observes:

Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being...

The regenerative force of life is ended for man when the oak tree sends forth its roots to pierce the "mold" of the dead, absorbing the minerals of the deceased in order to live and grow.

Comfort for the living is seen by Bryant when he cites evidence which suggests that death, even though final for the physical world, need not be feared. The poet begins the third section of this blank verse poem thus:

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant-world--with kings,
The powerful of the earth--the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulcher.

For those who shall die, Bryant finds solace in the fact that they shall not be alone in death. The dead shall lie down with the patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,
with the powerful, the wise, the good, the young ("Fair forms"), and the seers of ages past. Moreover, death and burial mean that man shall be placed upon a "magnificent couch," the earth.

It is in the middle section of the poem that Bryant introduces his sustained metaphor of the world as tomb, perhaps the finest passage in the entire poem. As the poet views the world, he notes that

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The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun--the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods--rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,--
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man.
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All in all, Bryant's view of death is a positive, affirmative one. There is nothing of the Darwinian struggle for survival, nothing of Tennyson's"Nature red in tooth and claw," nothing of the Calvinistic "sinners in the hands of an angry God." In describing the earth as the tomb of man, Bryant does not resort to self-pity, saying that death is the end of all human aspiration. Instead, the poet's attitude seems to be one of admirable restraint, one of exuberance for the good aspects of the earth, for its beauties.

Whether man penetrates the "Barcan Wilderness,"

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the desert land of Northern Africa, or loses himself in
woods "where rolls the Oregon," the Columbia River, the
dead are there in the mighty tomb of the earth where they
reign alone. Bryant then repeats his earlier view that
all mankind shares a common fate and will soon be gathered
to the side of the deceased.

Bryant concludes the poem with nine lines which pose
the greatest critical problem for the contemporary reader.
In these lines Bryant says:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

The poet's advice and his meaning are clear and unmistak­
able. He advises his reader to "So live" that he need not
fear death. The image of the earth as a mighty couch is
again employed. Death may be viewed as a pleasant dream.
Bryant's use of "So live" gives the last section of the
poem a strong didactic flavor that for the modern reader is
distasteful. Bryant grew up at a time when eighteenth­
century didacticism and Calvinistic Puritanism held strong
sway in New England. For example, in his first notable
published poem, "The Embargo," (1808), the youthful poet
echoed his model at the time, Alexander Pope. In Spiller's
Literary History of the United States, the editors say that "Thanatopsis" is "the bridge over which the youthful poet moved from Pope toward Wordsworth." Even though Bryant, in this poem was moving away from eighteenth-century didacticism toward Wordsworthian romanticism, he was still influenced by the Calvinistic Puritanism that surrounded him in Massachusetts. Today, didacticism in poetry is passé. This not to say that twentieth century poets do not deal with moral problems. Such American poets as T. S. Eliot, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and Robert Frost deal with moral problems, but they do not moralize. They point up the moral issue, but they allow their reader to draw his own moral conclusions. The contemporary poet may use wit, irony, paradox, but he does not use didacticism. These are some of the reasons why the concluding part of Bryant's "Thanatopsis" poses a difficult problem for the contemporary reader. Does the didactic ending render the poem unworthy of consideration as an artistic creation? In the opinion of this writer, the answer is no. One reads the poem for whatever beauty one may find in it, notwithstanding some regrettable and admitted weaknesses in the poem.

Bryant's "Thanatopsis," long a classic for the high-school reader, provides an excellent opportunity to the

English teacher to illustrate some of the attitudes of early nineteenth-century American poets toward death, nature, man, and the hope of life after death.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. Prologue to The Canterbury Tales (1387).

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour....

With these lines a fourteenth-century English poet began one of the great works of English literature, the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales. Whether the reader is meeting Chaucer for the first or twentieth time, there is a freshness, a simplicity, a sense of reality which causes him to wish to continue reading. Chaucer's Tales are held together by the common thread of the pilgrimage, and spring was the season for pilgrimages. Small wonder it is, then, that the poem begins in early April when the sweet showers ("shoures soote") have bathed the warm air and soaked the sun-warmed soil, driving away the drought of March. These same showers, so Chaucer tells his reader, have bathed every vessel of sap in such moisture as to quicken and bring to life the sleeping flowers which have lain dormant throughout the winter.

Spring meant, for the man and woman of the Middle Ages, a journey to some sacred shrine for spiritual nourishment, absolution of sins, and often for physical healing. For
Londoner of the Middle Ages, no shrine offered a stronger appeal than that of St. Thomas à Becket, the sacrosanct healer of the ailing true believer, who was murdered in the cathedral at Canterbury, December 29, 1170. Of the many miracles attributed to Becket in the years following, none was more common than the healing of the sick.

The Prologue begins with the high style of writing which was typical of the Middle Ages, a time when form and convention were matters of prime significance. The diction is lofty, general, formalized. Chaucer, having made his bow to convention, then shifted into an informal and specific style of writing which he, seemingly, preferred, as evidenced by the Tales which were completed. When the warm rains of April and the West wind have stirred nature, it is then that birds sleep all night with their eyes open, or so went the myth. In this bit of medieval folk legend, Chaucer voices the fourteenth-century belief that during mating season birds did not sleep. Chaucer repeats the legend in his description of the young Squire who loved so hotly that he could sleep no more than "dooth a nyghtyn-gale." In line twelve of the Prologue Chaucer departs

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19 Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, p. 31.
20 Ibid., p. 20.
from his high style, saying:

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages....21

The general observations upon the conditions of spring are ended, the zodiacal allusion ("the yonge sonne Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne") has been made, telling the reader that the time is in the sign of the Ram, or Aries (between March 12 and April 11), and now Chaucer is ready to begin with the specific details of his story.

The poet places the opening of his poem at the Tabard Inn, located in Southwark, a suburb of South London. He says:

Bifil that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye....

While the original Tabard Inn no longer stands, having been destroyed in the Southwark fire of 1676,22 Chaucer chose as the setting of the opening scene of his poem one of the most comfortable and spacious inns of the period. The poet tells his reader that the Tabard Inn could accommodate the entire company of twenty-nine Canterbury pilgrims.

21 All quotations from Chaucer are from the F. N. Robinson, The Poetical Works of Chaucer, Cambridge edition of the poet's works.
22 Bowden, op. cit., p. 39.
Presumably, from the name of the Inn, one must assume that its advertising sign was a working\textit{man}'s jacket painted upon or cut from wood, sleeveless, open at the sides and bearing armorial signs. The pilgrims were ready to make their pilgrimage with "ful devout corage," translated to mean with "devout spirit." Chaucer says that by nighttime he knew all of the pilgrims by name and that before beginning his account of the journey of some sixty miles to Canterbury he will give the reader a description of each of the pilgrims.

\textbf{The Worthy Knight.} Since social rank played a dominant role in the society of the fourteenth century, Chaucer begins his descriptions of the pilgrims with the Knight, highest ranking person, socially, present among the pilgrims.

A knight ther was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,  
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre....

Chaucer's "worthy" Knight loved chivalry, truth and honor, freedom and courtesy. In brief, the Knight personified all of the noble ideals which the Middle Ages held as worthy of emulation. Within the institution of knighthood there were combined the notions of masculine bravery, courage, and the cross, the symbol of Christianity. The Knight, then

\footnote{Ibid., p. 38.}
in fighting in his "lordes werre," was performing one of the highest functions of the age, carrying on a Christian crusade. In the fashion typical of the Middle Ages, Chaucer runs through a brief catalogue of the places where the Knight had fought, telling how he had conducted himself in each war and how he had always held to his oath of chivalry. The Knight had fought fifteen mortal battles and had participated in the lists three times, always slaying his foe. With Holbein-like exactness Chaucer describes his Knight, saying:

Of fustian he wered a gypon
Al bismotered with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome from his viage
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

This Knight was no "carpet" knight. His clothing indicated that he was a true soldier who wore a tunic made from cotton cloth. The tunic was stained with the steel mesh of which his "habergeon" (hauberker) was constructed. Since the Knight had but recently returned from his journey, he had not even taken time to don fresh garments before making his pilgrimage as a true believer. While historical research has revealed that the institution of chivalry was often an empty, even an hypocritical convention, nonetheless Chaucer makes clear in his treatment of the Knight that this man fulfilled all the chivalric ideals of courage, bravery, gentility. As the poet so well says, he was a "parfit gentil knyght."
The Young Squire. As Chaucer sketches the details of his colorful canvas, he next proceeds to draw a verbal portrait of the Knight's son, a young Squire. Of this youth, the poet says:

With hym ther was his sone, a yong squier,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.

Whereas, in describing the Knight, Chaucer uses images of dignity and seriousness, in describing the young Squire he relies upon words that are suggestive of youth, gaiety, sportiveness, and idealism. The Squire is a "lover" and a "lusty bacheler." To Chaucer the word bacheler meant a young squire who was ready to graduate to knighthood in the system of chivalry. Often the word meant a young knight. The long hair of the young Squire, which traditionally would have been worn to extend to the nape of the neck, was curled as if it had been laid in a press. In height the Squire was about average ("evene"), wondrously agile ("delyvere"), and of great strength. He had been in the cavalry at "Flaundres, Artoys, and Pycardie." Of his clothing, Chaucer says:

Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.

Chaucer's young Squire literally shone in the bright April sun. His coat was embroidered with flowers as was
the meadow, flowers that were both white and red. As any proper knight should, the youthful Squire rode well. He could sing, write, draw ("purtreye"), joust and dance. To be able to sing and dance were social requirements for the young Squire of the fourteenth century. Thus, it is no surprise that Chaucer makes frequent allusion to music and to dancing in his writings. As either a young or an apprentice knight, the young Squire would have been expected to become skilled in jousting. Bowden points out that not infrequently young knights were fatally wounded while jousting with older, more experienced men. It may seem paradoxical to the modern reader that men who practiced such deadly games as jousting were equally skilled in the fine arts of drawing and painting. The Middle Ages placed high value upon the amenities, and the skill required for painting was highly regarded. Chaucer makes perfectly clear that his Squire is not the effeminate type when he says of him:

So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curmis he was, lowely, and servysable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Even though Chaucer wryly suggests that the Young Squire is quite amorous, the poet lets his reader know that the young man is not a libertine. The Squire is a youth of

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24Ibid., p. 79.
high spirits, possessed of a robust zest for life. It is by such commentaries on men and their ways that the reader of Chaucer gains increased insight into the universal and timeless qualities of human nature. This is the Chaucer that is earthy, yet not unrefined. The Squire was courteous, humble, accommodating, and above all else, he sought to be of service to mankind. Finally, Chaucer observes that this ideal youth carved before his father at table. Thus, the young Squire was accomplished in the social graces and refinements of the fourteenth century, even to his table manners.

The Yeoman Dressed in Green. The Knight had one servant with him, a Yeoman. Social decorum of the age decreed that a Knight must travel with a minimum of a squire and a yeoman as servants. Under the rigorous and demanding mores of the time a knight must comport himself in accordance with his social rank. One mark of social position was the number of servants a man or woman commanded. Chaucer, as well as his audience, understood this perfectly, and thus it is no surprise that the third Canterbury pilgrim to be described is the Yeoman, in Chaucer's time an assistant or attendant. Chaucer's Yeoman was clad in a coat and a hood made of green material. The green color indicated that he was a forester when he did not ride as a yeoman.

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25 Robinson, op. cit., p. 754.
in the service of a knight. Of the Yeoman's equipment
Chaucer observes:

A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
(Wei koude he dresse his takel yemanly:
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe)
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.

The Yeoman's arrows had peacock feathers to guide them
straight to the target. So skilled was this Yeoman that
his arrows did not drop short of their target because of
an improperly placed feather. As would be expected, the
Yeoman carried a mighty bow in his hand. Always faithful
to the portrait he is painting, Chaucer tells his reader
that this Yeoman was tanned, since he was an outdoor man,
and his hair was closely cropped ("A not heed hadde he").
In addition to his bow and arrows, the Yeoman was armed
with a sword and a gay dagger. That he was a religious
man is evidenced from the image of St. Christopher which
he wore upon his breast. St. Christopher was both the
patron saint of foresters and many other artisan classes.26
It was not unusual that a fourteenth-century pilgrim would
be wearing a St. Christopher emblem so that no misfortune
would befall him while making his journey to Canterbury.

26Bowden, op. cit., p. 88.
The Prioress, Madame Eglentyne.

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,  
That of hir smlyng was ful symple and coy;  
Hire grettest ooth was but by Seinte Loy;  
And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.

Thus Chaucer begins one of his finest character portraits, that of Madame Eglentyne, the Prioress. In his careful delineation of the nun's character, Chaucer is never caustically critical, yet there is no mistaking that the poet is satirizing this church official. Madame Eglentyne is head of a convent and as such she is given a position equal to that of the landed gentry. As Bowden suggests, the Prioress may have been of aristocratic lineage since many young ladies who were born dowerless often found it expedient to enter the service of the church as a means of solving their economic problems.²⁷ What of the satire in Chaucer's description of the Prioress? The poet says in the second line of his description of the Prioress that she was "ful symple and coy." In the metrical romances of the Middle Ages heroines were commonly referred to as "symple and coy." To Chaucer's audience these words meant that the Prioress was guileless and modest. She would never have been associated with nor remindful of a heroine in a romance. She had renounced the pleasures of the world

²⁷Ibid., pp. 92-93.
when she took her vows. Chaucer delicately satirizes Madame Eglentyne by associating her with the heroine of the romance. Moreover, the mere presence of the Prioress on a religious pilgrimage, an act that was strictly forbidden by church edict, presents even further satire of this nun. With the social freedoms that had become part of the pilgrimage, there was daring in Madame Eglentyne's action of making this pilgrimage.

Chaucer's satire of Madame Eglentyne is never bitter; he always treats her with dignity and respect. The Prioress swore only mildly, her greatest oath being "by Seinte Loy," which actually was to swear slightly or not at all. She sang the divine service very well, properly intoning the holy mass. While her French was not Parisian French, she spoke the language in accordance with Stratford-Bow. Of Madame Eglentyne's table manner Chaucer observes:

At mete wel ytaught was she with alle:
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hir brest.

The Prioress was cultured, refined, and knew all of the social forms and graces. She let not a morsel of food fall from her lips when she ate, nor did she dip her fingers too deep into the gravy ("sauce"). Chaucer says that she

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28 Ibid., p. 93.
wiped her upper lip so carefully that in her cup not a trace of grease could be seen after she had drunk her draught. While Chaucer does not say it, there is the nuance of a suggestion, however slight, that Madam Eglentyne was too much given to observance of worldly forms for one whose life was devoted to religion. To be so concerned with manners and appearance as was the Prioress was an act of pride in itself, one of the worst of the sins that man could commit during the Middle Ages.29

As to Madame Eglentyne's character, Chaucer points out that she was very sensitive and merciful, so much so that she would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap. No doubt Chaucer writes in the vein of irony when he says that Madame Eglentyne would weep if one of her hounds should die or if someone should smite one of her dogs sharply with a stick. Chaucer is aware and his reader is aware that, with the human suffering which abounded during the Middle Ages, the Prioress' tears for her dogs might better have been shed for the general human condition of the time. As an instrument of healing and mercy the Prioress should not have spent her substance upon her dogs. Yet, Chaucer reports that she did own dogs and kept them in her convent, an act specifically forbidden by church decree.30

29John Speirs, *Chaucer the Maker*, pp. 104-05.

Not only did the Prioress feed her dogs roast meat and milk, she gave them white bread ("wastrel"), a luxury which peasants and middle-class people could not afford. Chaucer sees that the Prioress is vain, that she defies church edict, yet he also sees that her sinning is only a venial sin, a feminine foible. Chaucer understood, and presumably he felt that his audience would understand, Madame Eglentyne's pride.

It is in his description of Madam Eglentyne's physical appearance that one sees Chaucer as a universal artist fully revealed. Chaucer paints his word portrait deftly as follows:

Ful semly hir wympul pynched was;
Hir nose tretys, hir even greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.

The nun's wimple, or neck covering, was pleated ("pynched"), whereas it should have been plain, ample proof that she was given to pride in her effort to decorate herself in an unseemly manner. Her nose was well formed ("tretys") and her eyes were sparkling, a subtle suggestion that perhaps she was given to worldly pleasure since her description follows, almost to the letter, the typical description of the ladies of medieval romance. The Prioress had a small, red mouth, and a broad forehead, both being regarded as a
trait of feminine beauty in the Middle Ages. In the presence of company a quite proper nun would have had all of her forehead covered. On the contrary, Madame Eglentyne exposes a broad, fair forehead. The master stroke of subtlety is revealed in the line,

For, hardly, she was not undergrowe.

Chaucer respects this holy woman. There is every reason to believe that he likes Madame Eglentyne. Her faults, whatever they may be, are neither gross nor carnal. Chaucer sees the Prioress both as ascetic and as physical woman, and in doing so, he keeps both perspective sharply in focus. The poet is aware of the Prioress's femininity and womanliness when he coyly observes that she is not "undergrowe," a candid statement that the nun is a buxom woman.

Madame Eglentyne did not deny herself the pleasure of wearing jewelry, for as Chaucer points out, she wears a rosary of bright red coral and from the rosary hangs a brooch of gold. On the brooch there appeared a raised A and underneath it the motto: Amor vincit omnia, "Love conquers all." Chaucer presented his reader of the fourteenth century with a subtle double entendre in this phrase. To the church, love as used here could mean sacred, holy love. As the motto was originally used by Virgil in his Eclogues, however, Bowden points out, it concerned profane
love. Chaucer concludes his description of the Prioress with this motto, allowing his reader to conjecture as to the meaning in its context.

The Monk Who Loved Hunting. From his portrait of the Prioress, Chaucer moves on to a description of the Monk who loved hunting ("venerie"), a manly man, fit to be an abbot. That the Monk was a man more given to worldly pleasure than he was to meditation in the cubicle of the cloister is soon established by Chaucer when he says of this inspector of monastic estates:

Ye yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, when he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,--
That is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinion was good.

Rules of the church expressly forbade a monk to go outside the confines of his monastery. Chaucer's Monk gave not a plucked hen for the text that says that hunters are not holy men. As to wandering beyond the cloister, the Monk did not believe that a cleric who hunted and traveled beyond the confines of the monastery was likened to a fish that was out of water. The word recchelees meant in the fourteenth century given to violation of or disobedience to

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31 Ibid., p. 97.
one's duty. The rule obviously was too restrictive for the Monk. Nor did this Monk care for the hard work prescribed for the clergy by the church, preferring instead hunting and pilgrimages. Chaucer injects one of his humorous quips when he agrees with the Monk's attitude toward his duty, saying:

And I seyde his opinion was good.

This type of casual aside from Chaucer provides his reader with an example of his sophisticated wit. It is obvious from the poet's complete portrait of the Monk that he does not approve of this cleric's disregard for religious canon in order to satisfy his own desires for hunting and adventure. Yet, Chaucer wittily gives approval of the Monk's violation of church rule.

As to his manner of dress the Monk spared no cost. He pridefully wore expensive fur trimming on his sleeve, the finest of the land, according to Chaucer. The poet describes the Monk in this manner:

And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.

Not only did the Monk indulge his vanity in expensive and expressly-forbidden grey fur, he fastened the hood to his cape with a wrought gold pin, an intricate love knot.
Such display of fine and expensive jewelry is the last act that a devout and conscientious cleric would have committed. What an image the shining face of the well-fed Monk provides when contrasted with the traditionally pale ascetic who is thin and emaciated! This Monk was not pale as a ghost. His boots were made of the best, most supple leather, fit for a gentleman at the court and certainly far too fine for a simple ecclesiastic.

The Merry Friar. Next of Chaucer's word paintings in the Prologue is his portrait of the Friar, "a wantowne and a merye." Modern readers may be inclined to conclude that Chaucer deals a little too harshly with the Friar; particularly may this seem true to those who assume that members of the clergy carry out the ideals and holy practices of their church. Chaucer does indeed portray his Friar, yolept Huberd (Hubert), as a man of little morality whatsoever. Was Chaucer justified in his attitude toward the Friar? Judged upon a basis of what Chaucer's contemporaries said of the begging friar, men such as John Wyclif, John Gower, and William Langland, Chaucer treated Brother Huberd rather generously.32

As early as three hundred years before Chaucer wrote of the Friar, begging clergymen, or mendicants, were known in

Europe. Originally, these ecclesiastics were humble, poverty-stricken clergymen who went among the poor to preach the gospel. Since they had no source of livelihood, they had to resort to begging, a practice that soon proved itself to be so profitable that less devoted friars began to practice begging for purely mercenary reasons. At a time when religious belief occupied such a prominent place in the lives of the people, few persons had the independence of thought to refuse to give generously to these begging friars.

Chaucer begins his description of the Friar, saying:

A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye, 
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.

By observing that the Friar was a "wantowne," "a merye," and a "ful solempne man," Chaucer immediately characterizes this ecclesiastic. As a member of one of the four orders of friars, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, and Augustinian, Hubert should have been anything but wanton, merry, proud, and haughty. As a "lymytour," Hubert was a mendicant friar who had been assigned a certain geographic region in which he had the sole right to solicit alms. That the Friar was more concerned with worldly pleasure than he was with saving souls may be seen from Chaucer when he says:

In all the ordres foure is noone that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of younge wommen at his owene cost.
Contrary to the vows of his order, that of doing good deeds for the sick and the afflicted, Chaucer's Friar excels all the others in dalliance and in use of winsome language. As to the implication of the last two lines quoted above, both Karl Young and Muriel Bowden agree that Chaucer is saying that the Friar had found husbands or dowries for the many young women who had been his concubines. The Friar, it must be remembered, had taken the vow of celibacy when he became a member of his order.

Rather than spend his time with the poverty stricken and the afflicted, the Friar knew the rich franklins, or farmers, in the rural areas of his district, and the "worthy," or well-to-do women of the towns. Chaucer says that the Friar was well beloved by the franklins and the "worthy" women, presumably because he heard their confessions with such ease and with so little penance. Of his power to hear confession, Chaucer says of the Friar:

\[
\text{For he hadde power of confessioun,} \\
\text{As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,} \\
\text{For of his ordre he was licentiat.}
\]

Not only does Hubert say that he is licensed by Rome to hear confession, but he boasts that he can do it better and with more ease than can the parish priest. With a straight face

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33Bowden, op. cit., p. 124.
Chaucer says that the Friar heard confession very sweetly, and pleasant was his absolution, especially where he thought that there might be a rich reward for easy penance. For a sinner to give generously to a poor order of friars was sign that the person was completely shriven. Chaucer well knew that contrition was one of the requirements for penance, not the amount of the gift to the one who heard the confession.

Chaucer warns his fourteenth-century audience that the Friar not only was interested in young, unmarried women, but that his "typet" (it could be attached to his hood, his sleeve, or his scarf and was similar to a cloth bag) was always stuffed with knives for the fair wives in his district. Short, decorated knives were much sought after by the women of the Middle Ages, as also were gold or silver pins. The Friar knew how to make a friendly overture to his potential victim. Bowden points out that "Simple country women were easily bemused by these glittering gifts from friars, especially if the giver possessed such fascinating accomplishments as Brother Hubert."34 That the Friar was a virile man is shown in Chaucer's description of him as being as strong as a champion athlete. The Friar had a very merry voice; he was skilled in playing a stringed instrument, and he took the prize when it came to singing wedding songs. Hubert knew the taverns in every town, and

34Ibid., p. 126.
he was well acquainted with all the barmaids. The Friar
thought that it was beneath his dignity to cultivate the
acquaintance of a leper or a female beggar, especially if
to do so would not benefit him financially. Chaucer uses
the word vertuous in a paradoxical sense when he says of
the Friar

Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.

In the fourteenth century vertuous meant, among other things, capable (OED). Physical chastity was also one of the mean­nings of vertuous. For Hubert, as Chaucer makes clear, capable was the proper connotation of the word for this "worthy lymytour."

The Merchant with the Forked Beard. Chaucer's well-to­do Merchant was dressed in motley, proper attire for a state occasion; he wore a beaver hat from Flanders, and his boots were neatly fastened. The Merchant sopke his opinions very pompously, talking always about his profits ("wynnyng"). This man told the pilgrims that he wished that the sea could always be kept open between Middleburg and Orwell, a necessity for foreign trade.

In his brief description of the Merchant, Chaucer has virtually nothing to say that is uncomplimentary in any direct sense. It must be presumed that Chaucer knew that the mercantile class was a rising group in both its economic
and political powers. His father, John Chaucer, was a member of the mercantile class since he was a vintner, a trader and importer of wines. It may be that Chaucer realized the importance and power of such a man as his Merchant and for this reason he did not identify him.

The Clerk of Oxenford.

A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,  
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.  
As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
But looked holwe, and therto sobrely.

Chaucer's Oxford student is something of an ideal university scholar. Long ago he had applied himself to the study of logic. His horse was as lean as a rake; and the student himself was by no means fat, but looked hollow and solemn. The Clerk's overcoat was threadbare, for as yet he had no benefice, and he was not worldly enough to obtain some kind of office as a means of livelihood. That the Oxford student was all scholar there can be no doubt, for Chaucer says of him:

For hym was levere have at his beedes heed  
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie....

This is the true scholar. He would rather have twenty books of Aristotle and his philosophy, all bound in red and black, at the head of his bed than to have rich clothing, or a
fiddle, or a gay psaltery. This ideal youth spent all of the money he could obtain on books and on his schooling. Chaucer says:

Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was seyd in form and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

This student was economical in his speech; he spoke not one word more than was necessary, and what he did say was said correctly, modestly, and pointedly, filled with worthwhile meaning. His talk concerned moral themes and gladly would he learn and gladly teach. Bowden points out that about the year 1400 Oxford employed a system of tutors, one means by which the Clerk might have earned part of his expenses. Since the student had long ago applied himself to the study of logic, this suggests that he had completed the requirements for the bachelor's degree and was now pursuing a course of study that would take him to the master's degree. At the time Chaucer wrote the Prologue four years were required to earn a bachelor's degree and three to four more for the master's degree. A great part of those three years was spent in the study of Aristotle and of logic. Chaucer hints that the Oxford student is a tutor since he would "gladly teche."

\[^{35}\text{Ibid., p. 156.}\]
The Good Wife of Bath.

A good wif was ther of biseide Bathe,
But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt,
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.

Chaucer sets the tone of his description of the Good Wife of Bath when he calls her a "good" wife. If Dame Alice (she tells her name in the Prologue to her own Tale) may be relied upon, she was anything but a good wife. Throughout her five marriages, as she skillfully relates in her own Prologue, she had striven with her husbands for "governaunce" (sovereignty). In his development of the Wife of Bath's character, Chaucer produces a richly warm, yet vulgarly uncouth woman. Even though the reader may disagree with her moral standards, he cannot resist liking her warmth, her earthy, practical view of life and its pleasures. Chaucer says that Alice was somewhat deaf and that was a pity. In the Prologue to her own Tale Dame Alice accounts for her deafness when she explains that her fifth husband slapped her about the ears after she had torn a page from one of the books he was always reading. The fifth husband, "yclept" Jankyn, had been an Oxford Clerk at one time. Actually, Alice was not from Bath as Chaucer makes perfectly clear, but she was "biseide" Bath, or near the resort and weaving town of Bath. For a livelihood Dame Alice was a weaver, and as Chaucer says of her, she was so
expert that her skill surpassed that of Ypres and of Gaunt (important seats of the Flemish wool trade).

Since Alice was so given to pride she felt that she should be the first to go forward on Sunday at church to make her offerings. So filled with wrath was Alice, if some other parish wife should dare precede her to make an offering, that she lost all feeling of pity or compassion for the woman who had dared precede her. The poet's description of the Wife of Bath's attire is priceless, as he says of her that

Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;  
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
That on a Sunday weren upon hir heed.  
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.  
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

Her coverchiefs were finely textured and Chaucer "swears" that they weighed ten pounds when she wore them to church on Sunday. The coverchief of the Middle Ages was made of cloth and was arranged in folds covering the head. Bowden points out that the number of coverchiefs worn by a woman was a mark of material success and well-being.36 Alice wanted to let the world know that she was a well-to-do woman. Her hose were scarlet red and she fastened them neatly. Her shoes were pliable ("moyste") and they were

36Ibid., p. 216.
new. Alice was not a small, delicate woman; Chaucer tells his reader that her face was bold, fair, and of a reddish hue.

The Wife of Bath had married five husbands at the church door; and, as she lets it be known in her Prologue, she is currently looking for a sixth. Chaucer also points to the fact that Alice had had other company in her youth. As one might expect of Alice, her zest for life was such that she was an inveterate traveler on pilgrimages. She had been to Jerusalem three times; she had been to Rome, Bologne, and St. James' shrine in Galicia (Spain), and she had journeyed to Cologne. Chaucer gives his reader some hint as to one of the reasons why Dame Alice so frequently made a pilgrimage when he says of her travels:

She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-toothed was she, soothly to seye.

Alice had learned much by "wandering by the way." That Dame Alice was "gat-toothed" also suggests that she was amorous, both in and out of marriage. To Chaucer's audience the term, "gat-toothed," meant that the person who had this physical characteristic of having his teeth widely spaced was bold, false, gluttonous, and lascivious. Another legend to emerge from the Middle Ages said that a "gat-toothed" person would be lucky and would travel. Dame Alice's own incidental

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37 Robinson, op. cit., p. 765.
reference to this attribute of widely-spaced teeth in her Prologue suggests that she regarded the quality as one of the reasons why she was so amorous.

Alice rode well; she wore a saddle skirt, and her hat was as broad as buckler or target. That she rode astride is evidenced by the fact that she wore sharp spurs.

In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe. Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce, For she koude of that art the old daunce.

With these three lines Chaucer concludes his description of the Wife of Bath. In company Alice well knew how to laugh and joke and in the art of love Dame Alice knew all of the remedies, or rules, for she was familiar with the dance of love. That Chaucer was a man of cosmopolitan taste can hardly be doubted when one examines his attitudes toward Dame Alice. Chaucer well knew that this woman was too talkative, too loud, too vulgar, too interested in men, and too demanding of her husbands. At the same time, Chaucer, presumably, also recognized that Dame Alice was warm, human, likable, earthy, frank, and colorful. Chaucer never criticizes her, never lifts his finger to scold her, yet he never quite says that he approves of her. There can be little doubt that in this, the best known of the character portraits drawn in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer stands revealed as the consummate artist that men for more than five hundred years have credited him with being.
The Poor Parson of a Town. The character sketch of the Poor Parson stands as a notable landmark in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. For those who may have concluded that Chaucer presents critical portraits wholly uncomplimentary to the Catholic Church of the fourteenth century, the Poor Parson is proof positive to the contrary. It is true that Chaucer reveals the Friar, Monk, and the Pardoner for the scoundrels that they are. He is somewhat critical of the Prioress. For the Poor Parson, however, Chaucer has only the most glowing praise. The sketch begins as follows:

A good man was ther of religioun,  
And was a povre Persoun of a Toun,  
But riche he was of hooly thought and werk,  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;  
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.

The Parson was a good man of religion; he was poor in this world's goods but he was rich in holy thoughts and work. Although the Parson lived among the poor folk of his parish, he was a learned man, university trained ("a clerk"), one who preached the true gospel and who devoutly taught his parishioners. Marchette Chute in her work, Geoffrey Chaucer of England, says of the Parson that he

was a most uncommon ecclesiastic, gentle to the poor and austere only with the rich, and if there had been more like him in England Wyclif's doctrines would never have made the headway they did.38

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Chaucer says that the Parson was wondrously diligent and very patient in adversity, as he had many times proved. Although the Parson had the right to excommunicate his church members for failure to pay their tithes to the church, he would often give, without doubt, a portion of the offering and even from his own salary, to his poor parishioners. Further praise of the industry and godliness of the Poor Parson is offered by Chaucer when he says:

Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite,
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.

Although the Parson's parish was far-flung, with the houses widely separated, he would not, whether because of rain or thunder, neglect to visit both the rich and the poor of his flock. He gave them this noble example of first practicing good deeds and then of preaching to them.

Unlike many of his contemporaries of the fourteenth century, the Poor Parson did not run to London to St. Paul's where he could find a more lucrative practice; instead he stayed at home, and guarded his flock. Chaucer pridefully says of the admirable Parson that

He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre

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And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kept wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat mysscarie;

The Poor Parson did not go to the city where he could have obtained an endowment singing ("a chauntrie") masses for the dead, or where he might have been employed by a guild society as a chaplain, but instead he stayed at home to tend his flock and to keep the fold from the wolf. Chaucer's Parson held to the highest and most inflexible standards of conduct for himself, but in dealing with his church members who had sinned he was not spiteful nor haughty. Yet if a person, either of high or low social rank, were proud or obstinate, the Parson would at once rebuke him for it sharply. Of this priest Chaucer says:

A bettre preest I trowe that nowhere noon ys. 40
He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselfe.

In these closing lines from the description of the Poor Parson the reader sees another example of the poet's mildly.

40 Chaucer's use of the double negative in this line, "nowhere noon ys," was common practice among writers of the fourteenth century. Some writers would use multiples of three or four negatives in the same sentence in order to emphasize and stress the negative. In French: A Chaucer Handbook, this author points out that use of the double negative was grammatically acceptable construction in fourteenth-century Middle English (p. 362).
phrased criticism of the church of his time. The church of the Middle Ages stressed ceremony and costume. The Poor Parson cared nothing for pomp and ceremony, nor did he affect an overly nice ("spiced") conscience. Instead, the Parson taught Christ’s doctrines ("loore") and the principles of His twelve Apostles, but first, the Parson followed them himself.

The Pardoner of Rouncivale. The two most repulsive and depraved members of the Canterbury pilgrimage were the Summoner and the Pardoner, who traveled together. Chaucer describes the Summoner as having a fiery-red face that was a mass of lesions, pimples, and sores. The poet says that no medicine known to man would be able to cure his leprosy. The Pardoner, so Chaucer informs his reader, has recently come from Rome with his purse brimful of pardons. The Pardoner’s hair grew to his shoulders and it hung as does a hank ("strike") of flax. Unlike the typical ecclesiastic of the age, the Pardoner wore no hood because he felt he was more fashionable if he carried the hood trussed up in his wallet. Chaucer says:

Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His wallet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bretful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
Ne berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
As smothe it was as it were late shave.
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
It was a common belief in the Middle Ages that the Pardoner's glaring eyes suggested that this man was given to folly, gluttony, sexual indiscretion, and drunkenness. Bowden has reported that the Pardoner, a recognized official of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, had three functions: he sold indulgences; he sold relics; and he preached. His first two functions were more commonly associated with his calling and his title of Pardoner. That this Pardoner had newly come from Rome with a purse full of pardons that were still hot from the official seal made him all the more authentic and his pardons all the more effective for the erring populace. Chaucer stressed the Pardoner's effeminacy. He had a tiny, high-pitched voice, just like a goat; he had no beard, and he never would have, says Chaucer. Chaucer suggests that the Pardoner was either a gelding or a mare. Bowden doubts that Chaucer can be taken literally at this point, contending instead that Chaucer is speaking figuratively here of an effeminate man, but one who is a thoroughgoing libertine and rake, completely devoid of moral scruple. Another view of the Pardoner is that he is a eunuch.

Chaucer indicates further that the Pardoner is a complete fraud and hoax, saying in his description of this

\[41\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 275.}\]

\[42\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 276.}\]
man that a pillow case which the Pardoner carried he claimed was made from a piece of the veil worn by the Virgin Mary and that he had in his possession a fragment of the sail used by St. Peter. Chaucer makes it clear that these are false claims and false relics. This did not deter the Pardoner from wringing from churchmen of the day many a coin. By using his false relics the Pardoner could earn more money in one single day than could a poor parson in two months. With his tongue in his cheek Chaucer says of the Pardoner that--

He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.  
Wel koude he rede a lessoune or a storie,  
But alderbest he song an offortorie;  
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge  
To wynne silver, as he fulwel koude;

"He was a noble ecclesiastic in the church!" It is this kind of ironic thrust on Chaucer's part that keeps his poetry from deteriorating into a polemic. It is quite apparent, and Chaucer knows it, that the Pardoner is anything but noble. Through his use of humor Chaucer achieves a kind of detachment and objectivity in dealing with the Pardoner that makes the characterization of this official all the more memorable and believable. The Pardoner knew what he was about. He could read well a story or a lesson, but best of all ("alderbest") he could sing an offertory. The Pardoner knew very well that when the service was sung
that he had to polish his tongue to make money as best he could. Therefore, he sang merrily and loud.

In preparing these explications of the characters that Chaucer describes in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, this writer has followed the pattern laid down by the poet himself, that is, this investigator has explicated those descriptions given most attention and space by the poet himself. Explications have been written of the descriptions of the Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk of Oxford, Wife of Bath, Poor Parson, and the Pardoner. Some of the pilgrims Chaucer merely mentions in passing, as with the Haberdasshere, Carpenter, Webbe, Byere, and Tapycer. To others of the pilgrims the poet devotes a few lines in order to provide the reader with a brief glimpse of this person. It is apparent that Chaucer sought to present a cross-section of the English Population of the time, ca. 1387.

Dickinson, Emily. A Route of Evanescence (ca. 1879).

A route of evanescence
With a revolving wheel;

Emily Dickinson's imaginative powers of observation are clearly revealed here in the poetic description of the whirring wings of a hummingbird. The bird's quick, darting movement is a way of fading from sight, "a route of evanescence." The rapid movement of the bird's wings suggests to
the poet's mind the image of a wheel turning so fast that
the spokes blur to the eye. Emily Dickinson was aware not
only of the hummingbird's rapid movement, but she also
accurately observed its vivid coloration, a combination
of rich green and scarlet red:

A resonance of emerald,
A rush of cochineal;
And every blossom on the bush
Adjusts its tumbled head--

In these lines Emily Dickinson creates a compact picture
of a hummingbird as it moves from blossom to blossom.
There is subtly suggested in the r's that are repeated
from "route," to "revolving," to "resonance," to "rush"
the whir of the wings of the hummingbird.

The "route" and "revolving wheel" also suggest that
the hummingbird's arrival with a rush is poetically
equated with the arrival of a train, a mail train, as she
says--

The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy morning's ride.

The poet does not equate the hummingbird with the arrival
of a train in any real sense. Her suggestion is only an
oblique one. It is the imaginative association of the
whirring wings and the rush of action in the case of the
hummingbird that suggests the similarity between bird and
train. The tracks of a railroad are a "route," and
"revolving wheel" of the bird's wings suggest the wheels of a train.

The critic, Grover Smith, has commented upon this poem as follows:

Both the train and the letter were doubtless obsessions....Quite probably the best symbol she could find for herself was the flowers with tumbled heads, greeting with alarm, though not without humor, the disconcerting stranger. So too, in expectation of a letter, she must often have adjusted her tumbled hair before answering the postman's knock.43

Tunis suggests North Africa, a country that is distant to Emily and one filled with mystery and wonder for her. Of course, the poet, as was suggested above, makes no literal association between the movement of the hummingbird and the arrival of a mail train. The relationship is imaginative, associational. It is in this association of an experience in nature with imaginative truth that Emily Dickinson attains her greatest achievement as poet.

Dickinson, Emily. The Railway Train (ca. 1862).

I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step  

Around a pile of mountains,  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

The first two lines of the poem present a poetic image of a train that moves so fast that it suggests a cat rapidly lapping its milk. In the second line of the poem, the train "licks" up the valleys as it races across them. The train then stops to "feed itself" at water tanks, after which it takes an enormous step around a "pile" of mountains. The point of view of the observer of the train is from a distance. The tone of the poem is whimsical, almost kittenish. The poet does not say that the train now enters a town or village, but she does tell the reader that, like something proud or arrogant, the train will "peer" into shanties located alongside the track. The tunnel that the train enters she sees as a "quarry," and the train pares it--

To fit its sides, and crawl between,  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid, hooting stanza;  
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;  
Then punctual as a star,  
Stop--docile and omnipotent--  
At its own stable door.

The tunnel walls have been made wide enough to permit the passage of a train, and to the poet they have been "pared to fit its sides." The train "crawls" between the walls of the tunnel, "complaining" all the time with short blasts of its whistle. Like a horse that runs for the sheer joy and zest of running, the train will "chase itself down hill." In
neighing like Boanerges, the train makes a sound that is suggestive of thunder. This thing of noise, motion, force, and power, is yet a docile, man-made mechanism. On time, just like the stars, the great iron horse stops before "its own stable door." The poet feels the calm of the motionless train, but she is also aware of its power.

In teaching this poem to relatively inexperienced readers, the writer has encountered two difficulties. First, the reader accustomed to didactic poetry may ask upon reading this poem, "So what?" The answer to such an abrupt question is not as easy as it may seem at first glance. Involved here are considerations that touch upon the fields of morality, aesthetics, and philosophy. Manifestly, at this point the writer cannot make a full investigation of the questions which emerge from the original one. It can be said that in answer to the "So what?" query that Emily Dickinson has observed accurately, has reported faithfully what she saw, and has expressed herself aesthetically, imaginatively, truthfully, and poetically. True, there is no moral tag at the end of the poem. She has not concluded her poem as Bryant ended "To A Waterfowl" with a neat little package of truth, all tied up and handed to the reader. One can say, however, that this poet has captured a moment of truth for others to share.

The second difficulty that may be encountered by the teacher who attempts to share this poem with relatively
inexperienced readers grows out of the tendency on the part of youth to demand final answers. By reading "The Railway Train" with young readers and by explaining that a poem need not attempt to touch upon all human problems, the teacher can open up new insights into the nature of art and truth. In doing this, the teacher is helping to prepare the young reader to participate in the intellectual life of the last half of the twentieth century, an age in which the predominant thought surely is not didactic.

Donne, John. The Canonization (1633). Before beginning an explication of Donne's "The Canonization," the writer believes that a word of comment about the poem would be appropriate and perhaps helpful. As an outgrowth of his experience with the poem in the classroom situation, this writer would not attempt to read this poem with an average group of high-school students. The poem simply is too complex, too subtle, too sophisticated. In a twelfth-grade class of better-than-average students, the writer believes that "The Canonization" could be read with benefit, with enjoyment, and certainly with a broadening of poetic taste for the student.

An understanding not only of the content of "The Canonization" but of the poetic technique employed by Donne may help to prepare the contemporary reader for enjoying much of present-day poetry that in many instances has been influenced by seventeenth-century metaphorical
Both T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound have been greatly influenced by Donne's poetry, and they, in turn, have had much influence upon the poetry of the twentieth century. Briefly, the metaphysical poet is given not to the expression of feeling but to the analysis of it. He is concerned with psychology, with exploring the recesses of consciousness. The poetry is urbane, witty, intellectual, shocking, unsentimental, complex, imagistic. The metaphysical poet frequently uses irony and paradox.

For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love,
    Or chide my palsy or my gout,
    My five gray hairs or ruined fortune flout;
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve;
    Take you a course, get you a place,
    Observe his honor, or his grace;
Or the king's real or his stamped face
    Contemplate; what you will, approve--
    So you will let me love.

First of all, the title of the poem, "The Canonization," suggests a holy rite, an ecclesiastical practice, the elevation of an individual to the rank of a saint by the church. The rank impertinence, the almost blasphemous tone of the first line of the poem, "For God's sake hold your tongue," therefore comes as a shock to the reader. If the poet is serious, his irreverence is disrespectful. If the

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poet is using wit, then his opening statement presents a paradox: how can one be let alone to love (in the physical sense) and yet be elevated to the rank of a saint? Of course, Donne is speaking wittily; he seeks to capture the attention of his reader and to prepare him for what will follow. Instead of finding something sacred, a reverent commentary on a holy act, the reader finds in the first line of the poem a bold, shocking statement. In addressing himself to an imaginary listener who has been critical of his love affair, the speaker bitterly remonstrates his critic to let him alone and let him love. He tells his critic to chide him about his palsy, his gout, his five gray hairs, or his wasted fortune. Here again, Donne uses wit brilliantly. The speaker is so passionately resentful of his critic that he would seem to be a very young man. Yet, he refers to his palsy, gout, gray hairs, all appropriate to a saint, but hardly becoming a youthful, passionate lover. The poet admits that his love is an infirmity, but tells his critic not to waste time scolding him for it. Instead, he asks, why don't you seek wealth, or improve your mind with art? Or why don't you go on a diet ("Take you a course"), or seek preferment at court (by observing his honour, or his grace, or look upon the king himself, or pursue his stamped face on a coin (make money), or just sit and contemplate, anything, just so that you will let me love. Gleanth Brooks,
in *The Well Wrought Urn*, suggests that the speaker sees himself in conflict with the "real" world of business and secular affairs and his own world as a lover. The speaker's concern for his own dilemma dominates the second stanza of the poem in which the torments of love, so vivid to the lover, affect the real world not at all.

Alas, Alas, who's injured by my love?
What merchant ships have my sighs drowned?
Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

In the lover's examples of how his love has not affected the world of practical affairs, Donne draws upon the Petrarchan tradition of lover's sighs, chills, fevers. The lover says in effect, "All right, suppose that my love is an infirmity. Has it sunk any merchant ships? Have my tears damaged anyone's ground? Have my chills ('colds') retarded and set back an early spring? Have my fevers added one name to the list of dead which was published during a plague? Soldiers continue to find wars to fight and lawyers are able to find cases, even though the spokesman continues to love."

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Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We're tapers too, and at our own cost die;
And we in us find the eagle and the dove.
The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us: we two being one, are it.
So to one neutral thing both sexes fit,
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

In the first line of the third stanza quoted above, Donne continues to address his critic of the first line of the poem. He challenges his critic to call them, the lovers, "what you will, we are made such by love." That is, every facet of the lovers' lives is affected by love. One should not overlook the dual image of love as it is used throughout the poem. Physical, carnal love as Donne obviously implies, affects every aspect of the lovers' existence. Christian love also reaches into every facet of the life of the saint. The title of the poem, one must never forget, is "The Canonization." Yet, as treated here in the opening line of stanza three, a canonization means, ironically and paradoxically, physical love. The poet continues, saying, "call us anything, even call us flies, if you will. It matters not." Donne suggests to his critic that he may call them, the lovers, tapers or candles which are consumed in their own heat and fire. Here the faint suggestion of young, tempestuous, volcanic love is counterbalanced by the subtle image of the candles of a great cathedral, also a place where candles "die" at their
own cost. Cleanth Brooks' comment in *The Well Wrought Urn* is pertinent here:

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to "die" means to experience the consummation of the act of love. The lovers after the act are the same. Their love is not exhausted in mere lust. This is their title to canonization. Their love is like the phoenix.47

The self-sufficient lovers who are consumed as candles by their love, do not incur any expense for the world. In their love they find the contrapuntal opposites of the eagle, an image of strength, conquest, power, and the dove, an image of submissiveness, peacefulness, and receptiveness. Considered together, as couple, the lovers provide a whole, a totality of experience, something universal. In the next poetic image Donne argues both logically and pointedly. Rather than being consumed and destroyed by their love, the lovers are made immortal by it. Just as in the ancient legend of the Egyptian bird, the phoenix, that lived five or six hundred years and then was consumed in fire, only to rise anew from the ashes to start another long life, these lovers are made immortal by their act of love. Through love they lose their heterosexual identities and merge into one being, both at the literal and symbolic levels. Even though Donne does not say so, in producing offspring, the lovers become one, while in achieving sainthood, or canonization, the lovers lose their identities. There is the

suggestion here of yet another image, in addition to the symbol of the archetypal phoenix riddle taken from Greek mythology, the story of Tiresias, a blind soothsayer of Thebes, who was at different times both man and woman, knowing the troubles and joys of each. In becoming one, the lovers lose their heterosexual distinctions; in death they become one in spirit, or, in the colloquial use of "die" the lovers become one. In death, of course, as Donne says, they prove that they are a mystery.

We can die by it, if not live by love,  
And if unfit for tomb or hearse  
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;  
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,  
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;  
As well a well-wrought urn becomes  
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs;  
And by these hymns all shall approve  
Us canonized for love.

In approaching an explication of stanza four, the reader must not forget the conditions under which the poem began, namely, that the poet is defending his love from a critic. Also, this is an account of a canonization, a paradoxical one, it is true, but nonetheless, the poet is arguing throughout the poem that there is more than one way of becoming a saint, of being canonized. In dying by love, then, the lovers achieve an even more desirable, a more intense life. "True," the poet argues, "had we achieved our sainthood through conventional means, we'd have been given a fine burial with all of its form and
pageantry." But since the lovers have achieved their sainthood in an unusual way, their "legend" renders them unfit for "tomb or hearse." Brooks points out that in the seventeenth century "legend" meant the story of a saint's life. So, if the lives of these two saints are unfit for a great memorial or a half-acre tomb, then they will seek their own glory in pretty sonnets, which to all the world will become beautiful hymns. Because of the hymns, the world will look upon the lovers then as being canonized; they will have become saints. After all, the poet argues logically, a well-wrought urn, an artifact that is beautifully, artistically, skillfully done is just as good to hold the ashes of a saint as is a ludicrous, overdone, vulgar tomb that is a half acre in size. So, the lovers' sonnets are likened unto a well-wrought urn.

And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts, beg from above
A pattern of your love."

In this final stanza of the poem, Donne indicates the nature of the lovers' ultimate achievement, hinted at before in the phoenix riddle but now made complete in their

48 Ibid., p. 13.
canonization. The first line of the fifth stanza refers to the "all" of stanza four. So, "all" shall invoke us, the lovers. That is, everyone, the whole world, will call for help from the lovers, now considered not as profane but "reverend." The world, in calling upon the lovers for help, will see that just like true saints, they have found in one another an hermitage, a place of retreat from the world. Love that was peace for this departed pair of lovers has become the objective of those who remain on the earth. Because the lovers renounced the world, because they found peace, because they achieved immortality in their love, the whole "world's soul" is summarized and contracted into the example of these lovers. The world sees itself mirrored in the lenses ("glasses") of the eyes of the lovers. The world sees itself epitomized in the lives of the lovers. Therefore, the poet argues, countries, towns, and courts beg you as saints, as canonized, to give the world from above in heaven where you have gone as saints, a pattern of your love so that the world can benefit from your example and also achieve its own canonization.

In his bold and daring image Donne has shown how it is possible for lovers--profane, physical lovers--to rise above the lust of their passion, to achieve a kind of immortality, a canonization, through their love. In doing this, Donne has argued logically, using wit, satire, irony, and paradox.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Rhodora* (1834). In his essay on "Nature," in discussing beauty, Emerson says that "the simple perception of natural forms is a delight." In "The Rhodora" Emerson reveals in poetic form the same idea that he had expressed in "Nature." The reader finds the poet's love of nature, his awareness of the details of nature, and his fondness for the commonplace. Emerson begins his poem with these lines:

> In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
> I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
> Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
> To please the desert and the sluggish brook.

There are revealed in the opening sentence of "The Rhodora" the feelings of a New Englander. The sea-winds that pierce the solitudes of a Massachusetts home are not the "sweet breath of the Zephyr" that Chaucer felt in his *Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*. Emerson's use of the word "pierced" suggests the raw East wind of the Atlantic Coast. So, the coming of the rhodora is an early event of spring. In the rawness of a New England day Emerson has observed that the rhodora is "fresh" and it blooms in a damp nook. Emerson describes the rhodora thus:

> The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
> Made the black water with their beauty gay;
> Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
> And court the flower that cheapens his array.

There is the power of close observation revealed here.
Emerson is intensely aware of the contrast of the purple petals of the rhodora as they float about on the "black" water of the pool. The poet indicates his sharp awareness of the deep water of the pool that creates the impression that it is "black." His sense of color is satiated even further by the observation that here the red bird might come to bathe and to find that his plumes are cheapened by the greater intensity of color and brilliance of the rhodora. Then, in the manner typical of the singer of nature, Emerson exclaims:

Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew:
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there
brought you.

The impressions recorded in "The Rhodora" are all visual images. Emerson does not record any impressions that might have appealed to the ears or to the olfactory sense. He declares that beauty need not have utilitarian value. The rhodora has its own intrinsic value since it stands as a symbol of beauty. In expressing the moral sentiment that "beauty is its own excuse for being," Emerson presents a view he held, namely, that proportion and harmony are the bases for beauty. Emerson knows that he cannot define the purpose of the flower anymore than to say that it has
beauty and that is enough. He has never asked why the rhodora grows, and blooms, and is beautiful, simply because he assumes that its beauty is part of a larger plan, the creation of a cosmic intelligence which he called elsewhere in one of his essays "The Over-Soul." That is the Power that brought the rhodora to bloom and that brought Emerson there to enjoy it. Of Emerson's concept that beauty has its own excuse for being, F. O. Matthiessen, in his work, American Renaissance, says:

The beauty that is its own excuse is Puritan in its simplicity and barreness, Yankee in its insistence on fitness and utility, Neo-Platonic in Emerson's typical quotation from Proclus, "It swims on the light of forms."49

"The Rhodora" stands as a notable example of Emerson's theory that the artist should record accurately what he observes.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Days (1851). Emerson believed that his short poem, "Days," was his best poetic endeavor, and Matthiessen agrees with Emerson.50 "Days" expresses one of Emerson's personal beliefs concerning his own life: his misgivings at his own failure to rise to the opportunity to possess the transcendent kingdom of stars and

49F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, p. 50.
50Ibid., p. 59.
sky. Emerson felt that he had wasted his life while preparing to live it. The full text of the poem is as follows:

DAYS

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

--(1851)

In this poem Emerson uses as a central image the idea that each day is born the daughter of time, and each day comes and passes as silently as oriental mystics gliding across a floor. In addressing days as the "Daughters of Time," the poet refers to them as hypocritical. Why hypocritical? Do the days deceive Emerson so that he cannot achieve all that he sought to accomplish? Or, do the days follow one another as in a pageant, and so they are in a sense actors? In its etymology the word hypocritic stems from the Greek hypokrites, meaning actor or one who plays a part. Emerson held such a positive and sympathetic view of nature that one can scarcely believe that he would imply that nature, or days, would deceive him. Therefore, it seems logical to assume that the days
hypocritic in the sense that they are acting a part. Life, then, is a pageant, and Emerson sees that as the days come "Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes," they move so silently, so inexorably, that life seems to be passing him by. The concept of the poem and its every metaphor are so consistent that Emerson compresses much meaning into the eleven lines of the work. The image of the barefoot dervishes moving in an endless file is consistent with each day as it comes and goes. The days bring widely differing opportunities to man, ranging from "diadems," a symbol of something rich, and "fagots," a symbol of something commonplace. That Emerson completely accepts the doctrine of free will is seen in his statement that the day brings many possibilities for man, but it is the individual who must of his own choice decide how he shall make use of the opportunities that are available. As Emerson states it, "To each they offer gifts after his will,/ Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all." Presumably, by "bread," Emerson has in mind those opportunities in life that are necessary for living, vocation, career, something ordinary. For those who are more ambitious, each day offers "kingdoms." Whether or not Emerson has in mind political aspiration or some more generalized concept of the word "kingdoms," it is difficult to say. By "stars" Emerson no doubt has in mind the totality of man's aspiration, his reaching toward the ideal life.
In the presence of all the pomp and ceremony of life, Emerson sits in his "pleached" (covered over by inter­twined boughs) garden, so absorbed that he forgets his own "morning wishes" and allows the day to go by without accomplishing what he has hoped to achieve. When he sees that the day is about gone, Emerson says that he hastily "Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day/ Turned and departed silent."

Emerson's happy choice of the oriental mystic, the barefoot dervish, as the symbol of the day is admirably demonstrated in the poet's seeming awareness that there is also something mystical about the nature of human aspiration and wasted opportunity. How can one explain ambition, achievement, aspiration? The day does not sermonize Emerson for his failings. It merely turns and departs silently. The poet is aware, however, of the displeasure of the day (or is it his own guilt complex asserting itself?) as he sees the look of scorn under the solemn fillet of the day. The "fillet" is a consistent poetic image as it is the priestess' headband, a distinctive mark of the oriental dervish. In the poem Emerson does not present any clearcut solution to his dilemma, unless it may be that one must accept wholeheartedly whatever each day might bring and then make the best of it. Emerson trusted in the fullness of the moment, but he felt that
his own ability to make the most of opportunity sometimes eluded him. It was a lifelong problem with Emerson, and it is so universal that men both before and after Emerson have felt and continue to feel that if men do not use the gifts brought by each day, the gifts are carried silently away at the close of the day.

Frost, Robert. Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (1923). In the opinion of this writer, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is one of the finest lyric poems in the language and certainly one of the greatest of American poems. Frost's achievement in this poem is unsurpassed in American letters. Consider that the poem is by an American poet who gives his lines a setting in a region of the country that he knows well and loves. His objects, metaphors, and images are typical of the New England countryside in which the poet lives. The setting is rural and everything in the poem is consistently agrarian. The first stanza is:

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

The poet is relating a simple incident. The time is evening; the season is winter. The speaker is recounting his experience of stopping by the woods, knowing that he has full freedom to look and to enjoy this winter scene,
for he knows that the owner lives in the village. In his assertion that he, the poet, will "watch his woods fill up with snow," Frost strikes a lyrical note. There is an awareness on the part of the speaker of the beauty of the scene.

The speaker is careful not to say why he is here at the edge of the woods, but he does tell his reader that he is driving a horse, for he says in the second stanza:

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

In this stanza Frost says that his little horse must think it queer that his driver has stopped, seemingly for no good reason. This line looks innocent enough, but it is here that Frost tells his reader in unmistakable terms that this poem is metaphoric, just as he is speaking metaphorically when he says that his horse must think it queer that he has stopped in the middle of nowhere. If Frost is speaking in symbolic terms in the poem, then it is not strange that the horse would wonder that his driver has stopped, but not in front of a farmhouse as was his custom. The last two lines of the second stanza of the poem continue the mood or tone of the poem, tangibly reminding the reader all the time that this is rural scenery and the time is a dark evening in winter.
In the third stanza of the poem, Frost uses his horse to bring to a climax the moment of relaxation, the period of reflection, when he says:

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

For sheer lyrical beauty, the last two lines of this stanza are almost unparalleled in American poetry, in the opinion of this writer. Just feel that flow of simple words "... the sweep/ Of easy wind and downy flake." When the horse gives his harness bells a shake, he forces the poet to return from his reverie by the woodside and reminds him that there is a world of reality, a world of human obligation from which no man can escape. Again, the reader must assume Frost is speaking metaphorically when he says that his horse is asking if there is some mistake. As this writer shall attempt to show presently, this obvious use of metaphor by Frost is basic to any symbolic or philosophic meaning of the poem. If the writer cannot establish that Frost is speaking in terms that are larger and more universal in significance than merely simple narration in this poem, the meaning of the poem is severely restricted. The reader then must interpret the poem as an account of an experience in observing the beauty of winter.
The poet is intensely aware of the beauty of this scene and the experience he has had is fully revealed in the fourth and last stanza of the poem in which Frost says:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The full force of the beauty of the scene again presses in upon the consciousness of the speaker. He sees that the woods are lovely, and they are dark and deep. His reverie is ended, however, as he remembers his obligations that interrupt his meditation, recalling him to the world of human and practical affairs. Frost's restraint in this poem is remarkable. The reader will recall that Bryant could not resist the addition of a moral tag at the conclusion of "To A Waterfowl" and "Thanatopsis." Frost resists any moralistic temptation that he may have had. He reiterates or echoes the last thought of the poem, repeating as though he is reminding himself that he must be going now. Here the poem ends. Read at its most elemental or primary level, Frost has told his reader that in the process of performing daily routines, one can experience beauty. But, does the poem have meanings that go beyond this elemental level?

John Ciardi, American poet and poetry editor of the Saturday Review, thinks that there are broad, universal
meanings which go beyond the primary level of meaning of the poem. Speaking of the promises the poet has to keep, Ciardi, in his explication of the poem, says:

The errand, I will venture a bit brashly for lack of space, is left generalized in order the more aptly to suggest any errand in life and, therefore, life itself.\(^{51}\)

To Ciardi, the poet has separated himself for the moment from the village, one symbol of reality, for this other reality of the dark woods, beauty, and the world of the imagination. For a brief interlude the poet is in a world apart from the village and the owner of the woods, the world of mankind, for this world of the dark woods. Ciardi suggests the possibility that the spokesman is on "the road of life" and here at this moment when he is caught up in reflecting about life, he may be attracted toward the dark woods. The dark woods have the attraction of great beauty and they symbolize for Ciardi the possibility of forgetfulness, or escape from the realities of the other world, or possibly even death. Of this Ciardi says:

Can one fail to sense by now that the dark and the snow-fall symbolize a death-wish, however momentary, i.e., that hunger for final rest and surrender that a man may feel, but not a beast.\(^{52}\)


\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 15.
Ciardi is careful not to say that Frost specifically had in mind that the speaker, whether it be Frost or any other man, yearned for death. Ciardi explains that many persons have asked Frost just what he meant in the poem and Frost has always turned away the question. As Ciardi asserts, Frost "has always turned it away because he cannot answer it. He could answer some part of it. But some part is not enough."53

The fact is that Frost, or the speaker in the poem, does not yield to the attraction of the woods that are lovely, dark and deep. His reason for this simple decision is that he has miles to go before he can sleep. He has human obligations to meet and duties to perform before he can yield finally and absolutely to the dark woods.

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" can be read effectively and satisfyingly at different levels, each having its own validity and its own truth. At an elemental and primary level, the poem is an account of a simple human experience. At a metaphoric or symbolic level, the poem gives insight into man's imaginative nature, his yearnings, his sensibilities. Read for its language, its sounds, its rhythms, the poem is equally satisfying. In conclusion, this writer ventures the opinion that the poem is all these things that have been suggested and more.

53Ibid., p. 15.
Quite possibly, this poem reveals one of the qualities of great poetry, namely, that it can be read at many, many levels of experience. The poem is similar to a stone dropped into a quiet pond. As each ripple moves out from the central impulse, it moves in an ever-widening circle until finally ripples are overlapping and move against other ripples. Perhaps this is what human experience, or a great poem means.

Frost, Robert. *The Road Not Taken* (1916). Both Bryant and Emerson were nature poets in the romantic sense of the word. Each was effusive about nature; each took an idealized view of nature; and each assumed that God was revealed through nature. Robert Frost also is a nature poet, but not in the same sense that Bryant and Emerson were nature poets. Frost finds his image and metaphor in nature, but his attitude toward nature is unlike that of Bryant and Emerson. Frost is not effusive about nature; he does not rhapsodize about nature; and has little to say about nature as a revelation of a supreme being. Frost is Grecian in his attitude toward nature. He obviously loves the hills, the woods, the rural scene, and the farm, but this love of nature is never expressed in passionate terms. Frost is noted for his strength and restraint.

"The Road Not Taken" provides excellent material for the method of explication de texte. The poem is short,
being just four stanzas in length; the poem is sufficiently reflective to induce some abstract speculation concerning its meaning; and it is not encumbered with obscure literary allusions. The first stanza of the poem reads as follows:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

At the outset, the reader is told that the poet was confronted with a choice between two different roads. He was sorry that he could not travel both roads and be one traveler. Faced with the necessity of deciding which road he should take, the poet did not rush headlong into his decision, but instead he looked down one as far as he could. Finally, the poet was forced to make a decision between roads, which he records in stanza two:

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

He decided to take the "other road," which was just as fair as the one he had been considering, and he gives as his reason that the road he chose was "grassy and wanted wear," even though both roads were worn about the same.
In the third stanza of the poem Frost says:

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted that I should ever come back.

Whatever the poem may mean at a symbolic level, there can be no doubt as to its primary meaning. Frost says clearly that once he had made his decision as to which road he would take, he knew that there could be not any turning back, although he kept the first road for another day. Frost concludes his poem, saying of the experience that:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

At the conclusion of his poem, Frost assumes a kind of humorous mask when he says that he will recall this experience and decision sometime in the future, "ages and ages hence." He does not venture an opinion as to where he will be ages and ages hence. He only says, "Somewhere." The poem is given unity by the poet's reference to the decision which confronted him in the first stanza as to which road he should take. He tells his reader in the closing lines of the poem that he took the road less traveled and that has made all the difference.
What does Frost mean by the road less traveled, and how has this decision to follow this road made all the difference? For many readers of Frost's poetry, these questions need no answers. The fact that they are raised for consideration is enough. For other readers they are questions that insist upon an answer. Is the poem symbolic? Is Frost speaking metaphorically? One interpretation that has been given to the poem is that Frost is dealing with "the whimsical, accidental nature of the formative decision." Writing in the Sewanee Review, Yvor Winters, poet and critic, says further that Frost "is mistaking whimsical impulse for moral choice." This writer takes exception to Mr. Winters' view that Frost has mistaken whimsical impulse for moral choice. Frost carefully tells his reader that before making his decision, he stood for a long time contemplating both roads. The poet is aware that he must make his decision and he makes it upon a rational basis, selecting the road less traveled, although both roads were about the same. There can be no mistaking Frost's intention at this point, as he says in stanza four, "I took the one less traveled by."

This writer submits that whatever the road "less traveled by" may mean in symbolic terms, the poet was

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aware of his choice, recognized it fully as a choice between two alternatives. Even though this writer is aware that Frost is not presenting a little moral lecture in the poem, he would suggest that possibly the poet may have thought of the two roads as representing the life of the farmer and of the poet, or possibly the life of conventional orthodoxy and of individualistic nonconformity.

Gray, Thomas. *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751).* Thomas Gray is regarded by many persons as one of the most learned of English poets.\(^{55}\) His "Elegy" is filled with echoes and allusions of classical Greece and Rome, yet the poem in many ways is a strong appeal for the rights of the poor and the unlettered. That Gray's "Elegy" was written mid-way in a century that was notably callous to the "Chill penury" of the poor, seems one of the paradoxes of English poetry.

The "Elegy" stands as one of the best examples in the language of polished and refined verse; it is the greatest of Gray's poems, and, as Albert C. Baugh says in *A Literary History of England,* "Elegy" is "possibly the greatest poem of his century."\(^{56}\) It must be remembered that it was in the eighteenth century that William Hogarth produced his engraving, "Gin Lane," a satire upon the plight of the poor.


\(^{56}\)Ibid., p. 1014.
poor who escaped their misery in the industrial towns of England by making themselves drunk on cheap gin. Also, it must be recalled, as Alexander Pope said in his mock epic, *The Rape of the Lock*, that:

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,  
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.

Gray's "Elegy," which strongly asserts that the poor are to be admired and respected as human beings, is to be regarded as a transitional poem. In its classical restraint, formal diction, and impersonal tone, "Elegy" is of the Neo-classical Age (ca. 1700-44). In its rural setting, in its feeling for nature, and in its concern for the lowly of birth, "Elegy" is a forerunner of the age of romanticism which began with the publication of William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

As R. W. Ketton-Cramer, one of Gray's biographers, says, "It is almost impossible to analyse a work which for two centuries has formed a part of the English heritage, so familiar, so constantly quoted, so universally loved." Yet, as experience clearly has shown this writer, for many college students today, "Elegy" is as yet an "unsolved mystery." Gray begins the "Elegy" with the now familiar lines:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

In the first line of this poem, every word contributes to the general tone and impression of the total poem. The "curfew tolls" suggests an image of the end of a day, or the end of a life. In its etymology the word "curfew" comes from the French idiom, couvre-feu. This phrase refers to the practice of covering the fire with fine coal for the night in a peasant cottage when the grate was banked at bedtime, an act that came to signalize bedtime. In an age when only the very wealthy could afford a time-piece, the curfew came into existence. Thus it came to represent the end of a day. The word "knell" is also reflective of the tone of the poem as "knell" ordinarily means the tolling of a bell as a sign of death. Then the final phrase of the first line, "parting day," is yet another image of the end of day and symbolically of the end of life. This first line of the poem is an almost perfect line of Iambic pentameter. The poet then proceeds to give the setting of the poem: the plowman comes in from the fields; a single file of cows follows a path across the meadow.

In stanza two Gray continues to create the impression he desires for his poem, saying:
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Darkness gathers across the rural scene. All life will soon be at rest; sore labor will soon seek its repose. In stanzas three and four Gray continues with his description of this country churchyard, until in the fourth line of stanza four he tells his reader that "The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep" here in this cemetery. Gray then takes three stanzas, five through seven, to reflect upon the lives these simple country folk led. Although Gray was not a laborer with his hands, there can be no doubt that he has captured the spirit of farm life in stanza seven in which he declares:

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

The feeling that Gray evinces for the activities of the rural scene is unmistakably genuine. These are the essential labors of farm life: plowing the ground, harvesting the crops, clearing the land.

Then, in stanzas eight through eleven, Gray admonishes the "proud" not to mock the graves of the poor. Stanza eight warns "ambition" that the work these simple rustics
did was useful to the world. Gray states his argument as follows:

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

He declares that the simple rustics who are buried in this country cemetery have had useful lives just as well as those who have had ambition or those who have belonged to the upper social strata. He was breaking with poetic tradition throughout his poem in the choice of subject and in the setting of the poem. Consider the contrast between this poem and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Pope chose as his subject the aristocratic society of London. Belinda and Lord Petre do not have to work for a living; they dance late into the night and rise at noon. In choosing to write about the dead who lie in a country churchyard, Gray was turning away from a sophisticated and urban society to a rural, simple society for his subject. Under the influence of Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Neo-Classicism of the age, the poets of the first fifty years of the eighteenth century generally elected to write about and for aristocracy and the "near aristocracy."

Gray shows that, for the nobility as well as for the poor, "the paths of glory lead but to the grave." In the country churchyard the graves have only simple markers,
whereas for the nobility great statues would be erected.  
Yet, Gray asks, "Can storied urn or animated bust/ Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?" The poet observes that even though these farmers buried here were denied the privilege of having their last rites conducted in a great cathedral ("the long-drawn aisle"), burial in the earth is the end for everyone.

In the next organizational unit of the poem, stanzas twelve through sixteen, Gray sets forth his theory that here in this country churchyard there may lie a great poet, politician, or musician, had opportunity made it possible for the ability of these neglected men to be developed. Stanzas twelve and thirteen read thus:

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;  
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Gray's use of the phrase, "Chill penury" to describe the lives of these simple dead is penetratingly appropriate for England of the mid-eighteenth century. One meaning of "rage" as suggested in the Oxford English Dictionary is "poetic or prophetic inspiration." Poverty and hardship denied the privileges of learning to these simple peasants, thus causing the "genial current of the soul" to freeze.
Even so, Gray shows in stanza fourteen that all is not lost:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some of these farmers, then, denied a wider sphere, were "born to blush unseen" and "to waste their sweetness on the desert air." Had they been permitted to rise above their stations they might have brought renown to themselves, but as Gray points out, they died not having this opportunity. Although opportunity for doing good was denied these dead, they avoided the pitfalls of evil:

Their lot forbade; nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

Gray develops the theme in stanzas seventeen through nineteen that the peasants, by living far from the "madding crowd's ignoble strife," were not exposed to the temptations for doing evil.

In stanzas twenty and twenty-one, Gray describes the rude grave markers in this cemetery as not being magnificent statues. Instead the markers in this country churchyard were a "frail memorial" with "uncouth rhymes and
shapeless sculpture decked." For these rustic people who lived simple lives someone cared enough to provide a plain marker, however, for Gray says:

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered muse
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

The marker bore the name of the deceased, his age, and possibly a text from the Bible. In stanzas twenty-two and twenty-three Gray says in effect that all men must rely upon someone to look after them when they are dead. This has been the role of the rustic poet who has carved the gravestones for the dead.

Gray assigns the task of the rustic poet to a local stonecutter whose life he describes in stanzas twenty-four through twenty-nine. The poet addresses the first line of stanza twenty-four to the stonecutter, saying:

For thee, who mindful of the unhonoured dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn...."

The "kindred spirit" found in stanza twenty-four above must be presumed to be some outlander who may inquire of the life and death of the stonecutter. In stanza twenty-five
Gray then suggests what "some hoary-headed swain" may tell the outlander about the stonecutter. Support for such an interpretation of this section of the "Elegy" may be found in an article by Frank H. Ellis, of Yale University. Ellis argues that the presence of the rustic markers in the cemetery presupposes the existence of a rustic artist.

When the village stonecutter dies, however, who will write the epitaph-writer's epitaph? Who, among these illiterate and unlettered people, will have the ability to make a rude grave marker for the stonecutter? Ellis answers this question, saying:

Gray assigns this role to a literate outlander, the Spokesman of the poem, the "me" of line 4. But in order to introduce the Epitaph into the poem, a further dramatic complication had to be invented. Gray imagines that after the village Stonecutter is dead and buried, another melancholy wayfarer ("Some kindred spirit") will enter the churchyard seeking to learn of the Stonecutter's fate. Still another peasant ("Some hoary-headed swain") will be able to tell the Enquirer something of the irregular life of the Stonecutter and point to the Epitaph written by the Spokesman and now fixed over the Stonecutter's grave.58

In describing the life of the Stonecutter, Gray says that he led the life of a pastoral poet. The lonely, melancholy existence of the Stonecutter is partially described in the words of the "hoary-headed swain":

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beach
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babules by."

As Gray's "hoary-headed swain" repeats his imaginary account of the life and death of the village Stonecutter, he presents a picture in stanza twenty-eight of how the rustic poet came to his own end, saying:

"One morn I missed him on the customed hill
Along the heath and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;"

The "hoary-headed swain" for years, no doubt, had seen the Stonecutter as he went about his daily tasks, but one day the Stonecutter did not appear. Another day came and still the old man did not see the Stonecutter. The next day, however, "with dirges due in sad array," the old man saw the Stonecutter borne to his final resting place, the country churchyard, scene of the poem. The "hoary-headed swain" then says:

"Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

In saying to the "kindred spirit" of stanza twenty-four (l.96), "Approach and read (for thou canst read)," the hoary-headed old man must have been addressing a literate wayfarer for these villagers could not read. Then follows
the Epitaph for the epitaph writer, the village poet and stonecutter:

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
   A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
   And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
   Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
   He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)
    a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
   Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
   The bosom of his Father and God.

Traditionally, the Epitaph has been interpreted as being dedicated to Richard West, Gray's close friend and fellow poet, who died in 1742, the year in which Gray is believed to have begun the "Elegy." If this is true, then West is the "Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown." The interpretation that the Epitaph is addressed to Gray himself and he is the "Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown" will hardly stand up under scrutiny. Gray was an exceedingly modest, retiring man. He sought the tone of impersonality in his poetry. Such personal reference as exists in the Epitaph almost wholly excludes the possibility that Gray is writing about himself. Ellis' suggestion that the Epitaph is written

59Ketton-Cremer, op. cit., p. 271.
for the Stonecutter's grave is the most satisfactory interpretation of the poem that this writer has encountered.

Ketton-Cremer includes an appendix on "The Composition of the 'Elegy'" in his biography of Gray. In this discussion concerning the probable details of Gray's work, Ketton-Cremer points out that Gray wrote two versions of the "Elegy," the second being an expansion of the first that was only eighteen stanzas in length. The second and final version of the poem, including The Epitaph, consists of thirty-two stanzas. Ellis believes that Gray decided to rewrite the "Elegy" because his friend Horace Walpole had advised him (Gray) that the poem was too personal. This, according to Ellis, accounts for Gray's introduction of the literate outlander, the "me" of line four of the poem, as the Spokesman. This also accounts for the introduction of the Stonecutter as the subject of The Epitaph at the end of the poem. In the first version of the poem, the "me" of line four presumably was Gray. Likewise, The Epitaph of the first version may have been about Gray.

For this writer, Gray's poem is consistent and logical when interpreted to mean that the "Elegy" says that the rural dead also have a nobility; they have someone to remember them when they die since they are just as worthy of remembrance as the "proud" and the "ambitious." The

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60 Ibid., pp. 272-73.
rustic, pastoral poet, the Stonecutter, is the one who erects "Some frail memorial" to the honored dead. He, in turn, will be honored by The Epitaph when he has died. The foregoing view of Gray's "Elegy" is consistent with the poet's extreme sense of modesty and with the impersonal tone of the age. A learned man, Gray presumably would have been aware that the "Elegy" itself would stand as "Some frail memorial" to himself.

To this writer it has always been a curious and ironical quirk of history that Gray's "Elegy" makes such a strong declaration for the innate worth and essential nobility of the common man just twenty-five years in advance of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The "Elegy" has been interpreted by some critics as a political poem. Liberals have seen in it a strong endorsement of the rights of man, whereas conservatives have praised the poem because Gray accepts the strong caste system invoked at the time the poem was written. This writer much prefers not to regard the poem as a political utterance. Gray was a close observer of the human scene. He saw rural England with sensitivity and set about to capture some of its spirit in his memorable poem. He treated his materials imaginatively, creatively, perceptively. The result is one of the best-loved poems in the language.
Hardy, Thomas. *The Darkling Thrush* (1900). In "The Darkling Thrush" there is much of the gloom and despair which occupied the thoughts of many English writers at the end of the nineteenth century. Along with other Victorian writers such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle, Hardy felt the impact of science and the scientific attitude upon *Genesis* and the eternal verities. He was alarmed at the loss of certitude and the human despair which resulted from the rise of science. With industrialism came the rise of cities and slum areas. The human squalor, economic exploitation of the masses of people, and in general the seeming purposelessness of all life made dark impressions upon the sensitive mind of Thomas Hardy. This outlook of the grim nature of all life is reflected in much of the fiction and poetry written by Hardy. Many of his poems are stark records of human experience at moments when jealousy, or passion, or the irony of circumstances reflects the grimness of life. From his poetry one derives a permanent image of human frustration. That he was not just a lonely intellectual who was isolated in his own self-pity is evidenced by the fact that in the first half of the twentieth century two major world wars have been fought and numerous "brush" wars have been endured and are being endured at present. The final irony, which surely would have been no great surprise to Hardy (1840-1928), were he alive today, is that man faces possible extinction by
thermonuclear bombs and the intercontinental ballistics missiles that science has developed.

"The Darkling Thrush" is dated December 31, 1900. Hardy had witnessed the end of what to him had been a dreary century and he had little hope that the twentieth century would prove better for mankind. Such was the atmosphere of his poem, which begins as follows:

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings from broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

Even the title that Hardy chose for his poem suggests the tone of the work. "Darkling" is a poetic word used to mean "existing in the dark." In the opening stanza Hardy is standing at the gate of the wood lot ("coppice"), looking out upon a desolate winter scene. The frost is "spectre-gray," and the overcast ("winter's dregs") is blotting out the wintry sun. Evening is near. In this wooded area of the "coppice," Hardy sees that the vines are twisted and tangled and that they "score" the sky, marking lines against the horizon, suggesting to the poet the strings of a broken lyre. So cold, lonely, and desolate is winter that all "mankind that haunted nigh" has gone to the fireside.
Hardy's ability to establish a mood is admirably demonstrated in the first stanza in his selection of whole clusters of words that create the same tone. He uses "spectre-gray," "dregs," "desolate," "weakening eye," "tangled," "broken lyres," and "haunted," all contributing to the atmosphere of the gloomy, confused, cold, desolate world upon which he looks.

James Granville Southworth, in *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, comments upon the poet's use of "Like strings from broken lyres," to symbolize, as follows:

The images in stanzas 1 and 2 deal with death either directly or by implication. Strings of broken lyres are a traditional symbol of death. Mourning cards and funeral monuments are abundant proof of this.

Hardy continues and intensifies the death image in the second stanza when he says:

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

Hardy's phrase, "The land's sharp features," suggests the bare, ghastly, emaciated facial features of a human corpse.

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translated into terms of the landscape of the December day in England which the poet contemplates. Indeed, the view is so deathlike that the poet is reminded that it may be the "Century's corpse outleant (stretched out)." Hardy is thinking of the events of the recently-ended nineteenth century when he refers to the corpse of the century. The poet frequently raised the question of what had been accomplished during the nineteenth century. What would man achieve in the twentieth? From the poetic image of the corpse of an entire century stretched out over the land, Hardy then projects a picture of the earth as tomb, saying, "His crypt the cloudy canopy." The overcast on this wintry day not only blocks out "The weakening eye of day," but it also provides a "cloudy canopy" as the burial vault of the corpse of the century just ended. The winter wind is the death song for this corpse. Life holds so little promise that even the "pulse of germ and birth" is shrunken hard and dry. Hardy concludes the stanza by universalizing the mood of despair, saying that everywhere upon earth life "Seemed fervourless as I."

It is possible to divide Hardy's poem into equal parts of two stanzas each. The first two stanzas describe the local setting and the world as offering little or no hope for mankind. The second half of the poem is comprised of two stanzas which show that even in the presence of so much despair there is some ray of hope for mankind as
evidenced in the song of the aged thrush. Stanza three of the poem is quoted below:

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-throated evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

The song of the darkling thrush provides the turning point in the poem. Up to this point all has been despair. Now, Hardy hears the song of the aged, frail, gaunt and small bird, a song of "joy illimited." The poet clearly sees that this aged bird has, in terms of the world, little about which to sing. Life can hold little promise for such a creature. Yet, there can be no denying the song and the joy it reflects. In saying that the bird has "chosen thus to fling his soul/ Upon the growing gloom," Hardy is aware that the bird sings from its heart a song of the fullness of life, and this causes the poet to re-consider his own gloom and despair, as he does in stanza four:

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.
Since Hardy has so carefully documented the hopelessness of the human condition on this wintry day in December in the first two stanzas of the poem, he quite consistently says now in the fourth stanza that he cannot understand the ecstatic song of the thrush, unless the bird knows of some blessed hope of which he is unaware. Of course, he is speaking metaphorically at this point. In a poetic sense, Hardy sees that the human condition and the condition of the bird are quite similar: the world of his time is stretched out like a great corpse and the aged bird has only a short time to live before itself becoming a corpse. Yet, there is the fact of this bird's song and what it means.

In the conclusion of the poem Hardy carefully avoids any categoric moral tag or didactic implication that may be drawn from the song of the aged thrush. The poem may be variously interpreted. One can conclude that the poem suggests Hardy's sense of futility at the end of a century and hopelessness of the outlook at the beginning of a new. In this sense, the bird's "ecstatic sound" is a delusion for the thrush itself. Its song of joy is nullified by the fact that it will soon be a corpse.

A third way of interpreting the concluding stanza of the poem is that Hardy sees the possibility of hope for mankind even in the midst of apparent despair. In the presence of so much hopelessness and gloom in the world,
Hardy is stimulated by the possibility of hope. However, he is not certain about the fulfillment of this hope. Southworth suggests that Hardy related his hope to some kind of cosmic plan. On this point Southworth says:

When Hardy's own mood harmonized with the desolateness of the setting--"fervourless" is his term for it--the contrast of a joyous note would stimulate his imagination. He knew he could give greater significance to the incident by relating it to a greater idea, call it cosmic if you wish. He related it to a problem that beset him early and late, a problem the satisfactory solution to which he could never reach, although he was wise enough to know that his approach was nearer than that of the ordinary person and as near as that reached by many advanced thinkers of his day.62

Hardy was unable to accept without some reservation the fundamentalists' belief in an omnipotent, all-wise, kind, loving God. He was too much aware of the crass struggle and vulturism of all life to account for the pain and suffering of the world by means of a concept that said that "God loves all."

Hardy's sensitivity in realizing the irony of the ecstatic song of the thrush as being a "death-lament," influenced much of the fiction that he wrote, as well as his poetic attitudes. Harvey Curtis Webster in his book, *On a Darkling Plain*, narrates the following incident:

62Ibid., p. 192.
As an old man of eighty, he exclaimed against Mrs. Hardy's speaking of a "lovely, frosty morning"--"It is too inconsiderate of the birds' suffering." Two of the most lasting impressions of his childhood, his painful remembrance of the frozen field-fare and of the starved sheep-keeping boy, were connected with the cruelty of the struggle for existence.63

In the light of the foregoing discussion of Hardy's awareness of the irony of life, its cruelties, its voraciousness, one can see why the concluding stanza of "The Darkling Thrush" is difficult to read as anything but an acute statement of the intermingling of joy and pain, of hope and despair that seem to be the human lot. Possibly, in the larger sense, Hardy's indefiniteness as to the ultimate meaning of the thrush's song may well mean that Hardy himself did not know. Certainly, he was much more aware of the joy-pain aspect of life than were his romantic predecessors who glorified nature as manifestations of God.

Hardy is the very voice of the attitude of pessimism, but it is pessimism of Shakespeare's tragedies, a pessimism so profound that it plumbs the very depths of human experience. Hardy realized that ultimate satisfaction in life lies in imaginative conflict. He believed that whatever the purpose for man on earth may be, men are alive only while they struggle. Hardy had infinite pity for his fellow human beings who were caught up in the struggle.

63Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain, p. 43.
What is Hardy's relative position among English poets? John Crowe Ransom, editor of the Kenyon Review, addressed himself to this question in an article that appeared in this journal in 1951. In his essay Ransom presents a list of the five outstanding poets who wrote in English during the first half of the twentieth century. He makes the modest observation that he doubts that anyone will agree with his list, but for better or worse, he chooses the following poets: Thomas Hardy, William Butler Yeats, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, and T. S. Eliot.

In explaining his reasons for selecting these poets, Ransom points out that Hardy had to be included since he lived until 1928, and since the whole school of the Wastelanders—Eliot, Pound, Hart Crane—reflected the disillusion and despair toward life in the twentieth century that was first expressed by Hardy. Because Hardy's poetry was a thrust forward in rejecting the idealism of romanticism and in denying the doctrine of materialistic progress, he must be regarded as one of the significant poets of the twentieth century.

Housman, A. E. To An Athlete Dying Young (1896). With its remarkable clarity, "To An Athlete Dying Young" presents the high-school teacher of English with an excellent poem

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that lends itself to explication. Since the poem deals with the early death of a young athlete, the subject is calculated to interest boys. Housman's poem stands as proof positive that poetry is not an effeminate art form, a feeble diet for a real high-school "he-man." On the contrary, careful explication of "To An Athlete Dying Young" can serve as the invitation to both boys and girls to develop a sincere and abiding love for poetry.

In teaching Housman's poem to adolescents, this writer has found that the poem can serve a number of functions. Many high-school students bring with them an attitude toward death that is over sentimentalized and influenced by much superstition; Housman's calm, rational, ironical treatment of death can do much to dispel these undesirable attitudes toward death. Today's high-school student is quite likely to have an exaggerated view of the importance of winning athletic contests. Housman's poem is likely to debunk the belief that the most important thing in the world is that of defeating the school's greatest rival. For the boy or girl who thinks of himself as the "Big Shot" athlete of the school, Housman's poem can do much to bring this kind of adolescent outlook into a more mature perspective.

For various reasons that do not fall within the scope of this investigation, most high-school students are unprepared emotionally and intellectually to read contemporary
poetry. "To An Athlete Dying Young" is an excellent poem to use as a means of introducing the high-school student to some of the differences between romantic poetry, for example, and modern, or contemporary poetry. To contrast Poe's emotional, sentimental, attitude toward death as evidenced in either "Annabel Lee" or "Ulalume" with Housman's will do much to prepare the young reader for the unsentimental, rational, and logical attitudes taken by the great majority of contemporary poets toward life and death. Housman's poem stands as an excellent example of the use of both irony and paradox in modern poetry and of a present-day outlook on death, love, and tragedy.

"To An Athlete Dying Young" rejects the traditionally held view that the untimely death of a very young man is a great tragedy. In the poem, Housman treats the theme of the death of a young man not as a great defeat but as a victory. The early death of an athlete is a matter for congratulations rather than for sorrow. How does the poet present his case so that it seems reasonable and believable? To achieve his purpose, Housman relies upon the use of paradox and irony. The poem is paradoxical in that Housman boldly congratulates the athlete, who has died, for winning yet another race—the race of life. The poem is ironical in that the athlete, rather than losing, has won the race. In achieving his victory through death,
the athlete's triumph is permanent and will not fade. In death the youth has gained permanent glory.

The first two stanzas of the poem are as follows:

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

With admirable conciseness the poet describes the public acclaim given the athlete for his victory. The men join hands to make a "chair" for the athlete and then they carry him through the market-place, the hero of the town as both "Man and boy stood cheering by." Then the admirers carry the lad home, shoulder-high.

In the second stanza of the poem, Housman describes the burial of the young athlete in terms of another race. He is still a "runner," only this time he is on "the road all runners come." As when he won the race for his town, the athlete is again carried shoulder-high, and just as before he is brought home and is set down on his own threshold. This time, however, the athlete is "Townsman of a stiller town." In this race the athlete's home is his grave and the town must be presumed to be the cemetery in which he is being buried.
In stanzas three and four, the poet declares:

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay,  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes that shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears:

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren in *Understanding Poetry* interpret Housman's account of the athlete's burial as follows:

In a familiar, almost conversational tone—"Smart lad"—he addresses congratulations to the young man who is dead; and more than that, he uses the images which are associated with the young man's achievements to describe his death. Indeed, the statement implied by the imagery of the poem is that the young runner has, in dying, won his race again—he has beaten his competitors to the final goal of them all, death.65

The early death, then, of the athlete as regarded by Housman is not one of great loss. Rather, the poet congratulates the athlete for slipping away from fields of passing glory. Housman does not sentimentalize nor rhapsodize the youth's death. The athlete has left the fields where glory is only fleeting. Housman says that although the crown of victory, the laurel, may be won early, it "withers" more quickly

than does the rose, a symbol of beauty. Not only is glory transitory, death-in-victory makes it possible for the victor to remain a hero permanently. The athlete will not live to see his record cut. When the athlete won his town the race, his fellow townsmen cheered him. Housman tells the youth that silence sounds no worse than cheers when "earth has stopped the ears."

In the fifth stanza Housman cites even further evidence why the lad is fortunate that he died early, saying:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

The paradox of the good fortune of the early death is kept before the reader constantly. This "smart" lad will not have to bear the humility of seeing his name die before he dies. A poet of less self-discipline than Housman might easily have become involved in extraneous moral lessons in the above stanza, but he avoids such a pitfall.

In stanza six the poet repeats the events of the celebration of the other race that the lad won for his town when he says:

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade

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66This writer can think of no better example in modern times of a hero who "wore his honors out" than Joe Louis, the much-admired heavyweight prizefighter who lived to fight too many bouts.
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge cup.

In death the athlete's townsmen bring him to a doorsill a second time. At first they carried him to his home in the town; now they bring the athlete to the "door" of his grave, "the sill of shade." Again, the athlete's feet are "set" on his doorsill. In telling the athlete to hold up his still-defended challenge cup to the low lintel, Housman employs an architectural term for the cross member that is placed just above a door. One way of regarding the "low lintel" may be that Housman images the door of the grave as the doorway to another town, the town of the dead, "a stiller town." The athlete has been vanquished by death, but he can still proudly hold his challenge cup.

The final argument for his case that the athlete's early death is a stroke of good fortune is presented by Housman in stanza seven, as follows:

And round that early-laureled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

Housman assures the athlete that he will be admired in death, by the "strengthless dead" who, by implication, cannot seek to challenge his ownership of the cup. When his admirers in the "stiller town" look at the young athlete, they will find the laurel wreath of victory still
unwithered, even though it is "briefer than a girl's." Housman makes an interesting observation in the last phrase of the poem. He says that the laurel wreath worn by the athlete as symbol of victory will soon fade, since it is "briefer than a girl's." Does Housman mean a garland of flowers worn by a young girl, or does he mean a garland of beauty "worn" by a young girl and which also will soon fade?

By the use of paradox, irony, and wit Housman has argued the case that death for the young athlete is a fortunate occurrence. Students have often asked, "Does this mean, then, that Housman is suggesting that life is not worth living and that we'd all be better off dead?" The answer seems to be in the negative. The poem must be presumed to have many meanings. Some athletes do die young, and for those who happen to die, all is not lost. Housman was painfully aware that life is filled with ironies, and ironically, sometimes the winner may not be permitted to enjoy the fruits of his victory. The poem possibly may be a stoical elegy, an unemotional condolence to those who may be bereaved over the untimely death of a young person.

For the interested reader who would know more about "To An Athlete Dying Young," a series of articles in The
An explicator concerning this poem will be helpful. The discussion centers around the question of what Housman intends to say in the lines,

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade.

Keats, John. Ode on a Grecian Urn (1819). In his lyrical poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," John Keats expresses a view that seems to have dominated much of his thinking throughout his short life of just twenty-six years. Keats was intensely aware that physical beauty of the temporal world was all too brief. For him the only permanent beauty that man could achieve was in the realm of the spiritual. Symbolic of lasting and permanent beauty to Keats were Greek poetry and Greek sculpture. Gilbert Highet, in his work, The Classical Tradition, says that Greek poetry and art to Keats meant the highest manifestations of the physical beauty, in women, in sea and sky and mountain and forest, in flower-laden earth and winding grottoes, in noble statues and immortal paintings; and they meant the spiritual beauty of friendship, love, and the kind of emotions, of imagination, and above all, of poetry.

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67The Explicator, X (October, 1951), Item 6; X (March, 1952), Item 31; X (June, 1952), Item 57; XI (February, 1953), Item 23; XII (May, 1954), Item 48.

To Keats, then, Greek poetry and art meant beauty, physical beauty that was temporary and fleeting, and spiritual beauty that was permanent and unchanging.

Keats addresses himself to the Grecian urn, saying:

Thou still unravished bride of quietness, 
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, 
Slyvan historian, who canst thus express 
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme: 
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape 
Of deities or mortals, or of both, 
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? 
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth? 
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? 
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

The Grecian urn is regarded by Keats as an "unravished bride of quietness," suggesting that the scenes which the poet discerns are eloquent though silent. The scenes which the poet notes on the side of the urn suggest to him that it is a "sylvan historian," able to relate its tale of life and beauty more sweetly than the poet can in his rhyme. Presumably, the poet then identifies certain human figures in the scenes and asks whether they be men or gods. One of the scenes depicted upon the urn portrays youths pursuing "maidens loth." The scene is suggestive of primitive fertility rites or possibly a bacchanalian revel. "Maidens loth" who are caught by the youths struggle to escape. The spirit of a festive occasion is suggested by Keats with the words "pipes and timbrels," both being terms that connote the pastoral scene, the shepherd's pipe and the small drum.
or timbrel. In the first stanza Keats has established the setting of his poem, scenes portrayed upon an urn of ancient vintage, scenes of human activity which have remained essentially unchanged for more than two thousand years.

In the second stanza of the poem Keats takes his reader back into the life and times when the urn was produced as an artifact in Greece. He says:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

In saying that melodies "unheard" are sweeter than those heard, Keats utters what may seem to be a paradox. Yet, this idea is basic to an understanding of the entire poem. If "unheard" melodies are sweeter than those heard, the conclusion suggested is that the power of imagination is greater than reality itself. It is in the life of the imagination, or the spiritual, that man has his truest being. The piper will pipe his songs of no tone to the mind, not to the sensual ear. As Keats views the scene he sees perpetual frustration as the lot of the "fair youth" who will never leave his song and of the lover who
will never quite succeed in kissing the girl, "though winning near the goal." Regarded superficially, the suspended state of action revealed in the scenes upon the urn may seem to suggest permanent frustration. Closer and more thoughtful examination of the scene suggests a compensating factor to the poet. The leaves on this tree will never fade and fall, nor will the beauty of the girl fade; forever will the youth love this girl, and forever will she be fair. In the world depicted upon the urn Keats sees that there is the presence both of pain and joy.

In the third stanza Keats describes with increased detail the first of the scenes portrayed on the urn. Of the plight or the good fortune of the youths and maidens, Keats observes:

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
    Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu:
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
    For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
    For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
    All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

In this scene portrayed upon the Grecian urn Keats sees that the trees cannot shed their foliage. In the song piped by the piper the poet senses a freshness and an unwearied charm that strikes him both as beautiful and desirable. Keats repeats the three elements introduced
earlier, the bough that will be forever green, the unwearied piper, and the ardent lover. Human passion as these figures know it will never subside nor become tired with excess ("cloyed"). Cleanth Brooks suggests that Keats here argues that all human passion leaves man cloyed; therefore, art with its timelessness is superior to the fleeting world of physical experience.69

In stanza four Keats turns to the second scene depicted upon the side of the Grecian urn, that of the ancient religious rite, the sacrifice of a heifer. He says:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead’st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e’er return.

In this scene a priest is seen leading a heifer to a woodland altar for a sacrifice. Keats calls the priest "mysterious," a term which suggests the possibility that the poet does not understand the religious rite nor the sect that is about to perform this sacrifice. Keats observes not only the joy but the irony of this scene.

The dedication and the sense of communal satisfaction ordinarily derived from a religious rite are equated with the negative sense that the poet derives from the scene, which suggests to him that these pious folk have left a village whose streets are empty and whose doorsteps are vacant.

Not only does Keats shift from individual life as portrayed in the first scene to community life as is shown in the second, he also shifts his emphasis from physical passion in the first scene to spiritual love in the second. But even in the presence of communal, religious, and spiritual love there is pain. The villagers are participants in a communal rite, yet, their homes and their town are emptied of all human kind. Keats says that, since the town is emptied of its folk, it is "desolate." As Keats well sees, homes are made to be occupied, and streets need people to give them life and vitality. The poet is saddened by the prospect that these people will never return.

In the fifth stanza Keats again addresses himself to the Grecian urn as he says:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in the midst of other woe than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou sayst, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

In referring to the urn as an "attic shape," Keats is using one of several terms applied to Greece, as earlier he calls Greece Arcady or refers to the valley of Tempe, a pleasant valley in Greece.

In the last stanza of the poem the point of view shifts from the world of the ancient Greeks to the world of Keats's day. He addresses the urn now as an artifact, saying, "O Attic shape!" The poet sees that the youths on the urn are only "marble men." The feeling that these men of marble are permanent while Keats's own generation will pass with the time poignantly reminds the poet of the essential meaning of the urn. The urn will remain, "in midst of other woe." Keats expresses his awareness that in the future human sorrow will exist as it does in his own time. To Keats, the truth that he apprehends is the truth of the permanence of art, as is evident in the Grecian urn.

In the poem Keats has seen that although the youth will never possess the maiden "loth," at the same time, he will always love her and desire her. The trees will never shed their leaves; the piper will always play his music. In contrasting mood to the sexual pursuit which
Keats describes in the first scene from the urn, he shifts to a religious scene in which a mysterious priest is followed by the rural folk of a Grecian village. Although the poet is aware that there is a certain irony in both scenes since the maiden will never be ravished and the villagers will never return to their homes, he also sees that these people are transcendent of time and place. They are now immortalized in the permanence of art. And, although Keats does not permit himself to descend to the implied didacticism that man should cultivate the arts if he would achieve the permanent, this writer submits that such a conclusion concerning the meaning of the poem does not force or wrench the poem into a distortion of the poet's intent.

Poe, Edgar Allan. To Helen (1831). This poem of three stanzas and fifteen lines is known both for its restraint and compression. "To Helen" has become, according to Spiller's Literary History of the United States, Poe's chief anthology piece. It was written in commemoration of his first love, "for Mrs. Stanard, who had died when he was fifteen." Poe once called Mrs. Helen Stith


\[\text{71 Ibid., p. 324.}\]
Stanard, of Richmond, Virginia, mother of one of his friends when Poe attended the academy in Richmond, "the first pure ideal love of my soul." This lady became Poe's boyish ideal, and it is the image of this woman that runs through "To Helen," "Annabel Lee," and "Ulalume."

The first stanza of "To Helen" is as follows:

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

The imagery of the first line, the Helen of Poe's poem, suggests the classical Helen of Troy, the "most beautiful woman in the world." There is the association of Helen of Troy with other wanderers, for example, Odysseus, who wandered for ten years after the fall of Troy before coming home to the "glory that was Greece." It is the memory of Helen and the association of beauty that draws the "weary, wayworn wanderer" home. Poe's use of "Nicean barks of yore," and "gently, o'er a perfumed sea" both contribute to the tone of beauty and aesthetic appeal of Helen.

In the second stanza of the poem Poe introduces the reasons why the beauty of Helen has attracted him, as he says:

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.
In the first line of the stanza, "On desperate seas long wont to roam," the poet introduces a dual poetic image. If the wanderer is the archetype of Odysseus, then he was on desperate seas. If the allusion is imaginatively autobiographical and the reference is to Poe's own life of lonely desperation, he was likewise "On desperate seas." Homer uses the terms "Hyacinth-haired girls," just as Poe employs the phrase in describing Helen. Similarly, Helen's "classical face" and her "Naiad airs" also suggest the classical age of Greece. The use of "Naiad airs" is particularly appropriate in its context since the Naiads were nymphs associated with Greek and Roman classical mythology. It is Helen's classical beauty then that has attracted the "wanderer" and has brought him home. Appreciation for Helen's beauty has taught the spokesman of the poem to appreciate the classical splendor of Greece and Rome, and it is presumably this appreciation for the classical beauty of Greece and Rome that has now become "home."

In the third and final stanza of the poem, Poe presents Helen as a statue-like figure that stands in a window-niche:

Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!
Helen is now suggested as a status, a poetic image that is particularly appropriate when associated with Greece. The image of Helen in a window-niche may have been suggested by the nineteenth-century practice of placing a small statue in the niche on either side of a large French or bay window. The concept of the statue is also consistent with the Grecian theme that has predominated throughout the poem. The agate lamp which the statue holds suggests the torch of knowledge, of "light," of learning. The idea of abstract beauty is suggested by Poe's allusion to the statue as Psyche. In the Greek myth Psyche married Cupid but destroyed her chance for happiness by attempting to look directly into Cupid's face. Psyche stands as a symbol not only of great beauty but of human frustration. The ancient world of Greece and Rome are suggested to the poet by "Holy Land."

Poe's poem is not a confession of love for a woman. Rather, the poem suggests that love for beauty, either tangible and accessible, or beauty that is intangible and ideal, can provide direction and security for a "weary, way-worn wanderer." It is beauty, the love of beauty, that the poet symbolizes in the image of Helen. There is contained in the image of Helen the whole spirit of both the ancient and the present world. Poe's poetic career was in part a search for the kind of beauty that he finds in Helen.
Robinson, Edwin Arlington. Richard Cory (1897). In this brief character sketch of Richard Cory, Robinson presents in an ironic fashion a rejection of the American ambition of becoming a millionaire. The point of view in the poem is that of the "people on the pavement," or the man in the street. In terms of the American dream of success, Richard Cory not only walked upon the earth, he virtually owned it. This is the setting then of Robinson's poem, which begins:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town
We people on the pavement looked at him;
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

The point of view of the poem, then, is that of "we," the common people who looked upon Richard Cory, and admired and respected him. Robinson's subtle use of "crown" and imperially slim" obliquely suggests that Cory is king of the earth. In the second stanza of the poem, Robinson declares:

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.

Cory had that "Brooks Brothers look," the "man in the gray flannel suit" appearance. He dressed with taste, spoke to the "people" with proper decorum and restraint. Nevertheless, Richard Cory fluttered the pulses of the ladies when he said good morning to them. For the first time in the
poem, Robinson may be introducing a negative connotation concerning Richard Cory. He "glittered when he walked." Everything that has been said of Cory to this point is in admiration of him. In saying that he glittered when he walked, Robinson is perhaps suggesting that even with all of his wealth, Cory was vulgar, vulgarly rich. Yet another interpretation of this line is suggested that, from the point of view of the "people on the pavement," the fact that Cory glittered when he walked was wholly a desirable circumstance, one which, perhaps, most Americans would enjoy emulating.

Robinson repeats and intensifies the impression gained from observation of Cory as a king among men in the third stanza of the poem:

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

To the people, the millionaire was a king. Richard Cory had all of the graces and the refinements appropriate to a monarch. Since the spokesman is "We people," the image of Cory as the affluent, well-dressed, well-mannered millionaire, with all of his creature comforts, becomes something of the American ideal so that all wish that they were in his place.

In the fourth stanza, Robinson presents his hero in an entirely new and shocking light. For the man who had
everything, Cory apparently had little reason to live.
The poem concludes as follows:

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

The "people on the pavement" continue speaking. Unlike Richard Cory, the people live meagre, limited lives, going "without the meat" and cursing the bread. Presumably, the people had little to live for and Richard Cory had every reason to wish to continue his rich and abundant life. The irony of the situation is that Richard Cory evidently had little to live for. Robinson tells his reader that Cory committed suicide on a calm summer night. It is to be observed that the poem ends abruptly. There is no comment, no moralizing, no interpretation. This, in the opinion of this writer, is one of Robinson's most significant achievements in the whole poem.

How could the people on the street interpret and understand Cory's suicide? To understand Cory's self-destruction would entail the renunciation of a whole set of social and moral values. Cory, after all, had achieved the American dream—he had everything to make "us" wish that "we" were in his place. That Cory had an inner life the people on the pavement seemingly never considered. All that they saw was the external condition. The people hoped that
they, too, could bask in the "light" for which they waited. Stageberg and Anderson in Poetry and Experience, suggest the reason why Richard Cory committed suicide when they say:

Belief in the light is one thing the people had; it is also one thing which Cory did not have. Life had no meaning for him because he lacked spiritual values; he lived only on a material level.72

The people worked for the physical sustenance of meat and bread and they waited for the spiritual nourishment that would come from the light toward which they aspired. Experiencing denial and suffering, the people developed the inner strength and fortitude to face their problems courageously. Richard Cory lacked their courage.

Robinson, Edwin Arlington. Cliff Klingenhagen (1897). The companion poem to "Richard Cory" is "Cliff Klingenhagen." Both poems appeared for the first time in the volume, The Children of the Night (1897). "Cliff Klingenhagen" provides a complete contrast to "Richard Cory." In his statement of the case of Richard Cory, Robinson concerns himself with externals. In portraying Cliff Klingenhagen, Robinson is concerned almost solely with the internal condition of his life. The first stanza of the poem is as follows:

72 Norman C. Stageberg and Wallace L. Anderson, Poetry as Experience, p. 191.
Cliff Klingenhagen had me in to dine
With him one day; and after soup and meat,
And all the other things there were to eat,
Cliff took two glasses and filled one with wine
And one with wormwood. Then, without a sign
For me to choose at all, he took the draught
Of bitterness himself, and lightly quaffed
It off, and said the other one was mine.

Cliff Klingenhagen does not deny himself the satiation of
his physical hunger. He has sought the company of fellow
human beings since he has had the spokesman of the poem in
to dine with him. In "breaking bread" with a fellow human
being, Cliff engages in one of the oldest of human acts of
mutual trust and understanding. Following the meal, Cliff
offers his friend a glass of wine, a civilized act of a
gentleman. For himself, however, Cliff intentionally
chooses not to drink wine but prefers instead the cup of
bitterness. In drinking the wormwood Cliff does not engage
in cheap histrionics or false heroics. He "lightly quaffed
it off." While Robinson does not allow his poem to deterio-
rate into a moral lecture at this point, his meaning is
perfectly clear. Cliff is used to adversity, accepts the
bitterness of life with no qualms. Thus, Cliff systemat-
ically exposes himself to the bitter cup of life.

In the second stanza of the poem, Robinson introduces
a slight tone of irony when he tells his reader that con-
trary to what may be expected, Cliff Klingenhagen is the
happiest man in town. In an age of automation, remote
control, and general striving for creature comforts, little imagination is required to discern that Robinson rejects the American dream of relaxed comfort:

And when I asked him what the deuce he meant
By doing that, he only looked at me
And smiled, and said it was a way of his.
And though I know the fellow, I have spent
Long time a-wondering when I shall be
As happy as Cliff Klingenhagen is.

Klingenhagen takes a stoical view of life; there is no soft hedonism about him, as there seems to have been with Richard Cory. Cliff Klingenhagen had found his sense of well-being through systematically drinking from the cup of bitterness. Robinson reveals his Puritan sense of right and wrong in this poem. Although the poem was published in 1397, there is little reason to doubt that the direction of American civilization throughout the first half of the twentieth century is away from the stoicism of Cliff Klingenhagen toward a striving for easy living.

Shakespeare, William. Sonnet #30 (ca. 1592-96). In this sonnet William Shakespeare develops the theme of his sense of grief at the loss of friends. In the first twelve lines of the sonnet the poet depicts with increasing tension his emotional state. Then, in sharp contrast, the poet states in a final couplet his joy in remembering one of the lost friends.
In the first four lines of the poem, Shakespeare says:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.

Shakespeare's use of alliteration in the repetition of the initial S's in the first line, sessions, sweet, silent, adds aesthetic quality to the line. The metaphor, "sessions of sweet silent thought," conjures up to the mind of the sensitive reader the suggestion of a session of court, or of a legislative body--something formal or dignified. The image of a session of court is continued in the second line with the use of the verb "summon." He summons up "remembrance of things past." In remembering past experiences, the poet sighs for those things and friends that he now lacks. Then, as a result of the sorrow which comes to the poet, he weeps anew for the loss of his friends and the swift passage of time.

In the second quatrain of the sonnet, Shakespeare continues:

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night
And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight.

When he recalls his lost friends, Shakespeare can "drown an eye." The poet is careful to suggest that he is not ordinarily given to excessive grief as his eye is "unused
to flow." Yet, his loss and sorrow are such that when he recalls his vanished friends he is moved to tears. The use of "death's dateless night" is an example of the poet's myth-making power and his ability to evoke universal and timeless suggestions of human experience. Death is a dateless night. Here, compressed into three words is a universal experience. Death knows no calendar dates, no anniversaries are observed, no holidays celebrated. Not only is death dateless, it is treated as a black void, a night-time of eternity. In remembering his lost friends, the poet weeps afresh "love's long-since-cancelled woe." Woe is here treated as a business arrangement that has been concluded, or else it is imaged as a real estate lease that has been cancelled. This is only another use of tangible, practical, and specific image which marks the genius of the poet.

The image of business continues in the fourth line of the quatrain with the expression of "And moan the expense," just as any spendthrift may moan his excessive expenses. The loss of friends in death, like a loss in business, exacts from the poet a plaintive note as he says, "And moan the expense," or cost of a vanished friend.

Shakespeare's feelings about the loss of a friend suggest a similar view of death expressed by John Donne in "Meditation 17":

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of they friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

For Donne, the death of any man "diminishes me." For Shakespeare, the death of friends likewise brings an exquisite sense of loss.

Shakespeare continues:

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone, And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan, Which I new pay as if not paid before.

Again, there is the familiar use of alliteration, "grieve at grievances foregone." The image of business expense or expense accounts is heightened in this quatrain. In remembering, the poet grieves at earlier woes, now gone, and in doing so, he must pay with his grief the "sad account" more than once. The poet in paying the account of his grief is just as distressed as a business man would be who has to pay an account twice over.

Then, in conclusion, a couplet reverses the mood of the first twelve lines. In contrast to what seemed inevitable from the three preceding quatrains, impending
emotional bankruptcy, the poet now tells his reader that in recalling his friend, all losses are restored:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

In thinking of his "dear friend," Shakespeare is able to restore all previous losses through grief, and his sorrows end. The poet's emotions are transferred from the "grief" side of the ledger to the "joy" side. It is this consistency of imagery in many of the sonnets which marks Shakespeare as the genius that he was. In a larger sense, the whole sonnet is written as if it were an account of a chancery suit to recover a bad debt. The first quatrain suggests a court session through such terms as "sessions" and "summon." The imaginary legal action then continues throughout the poem until in the end the court reaches its "decision" and in recalling his lost friend, the poet finds all "losses are restored, and sorrows end."

In terms of cosmic truths or profound philosophy, Sonnet 30 is rather simple. Yet, in its broader sense, the poem deals with the universal themes of loss of friends and the separation of friends through death. The poet treats the subject imaginatively and with freshness and creativity.

The experience of reading and analyzing a Shakespearean sonnet is a helpful exercise for the high-school student as an introduction to reading the plays. The tyro is introduced to Shakespearean diction, compression of thought,
and the use of metaphor through the fourteen-line sonnet, a brief and manageable literary form. Edward Hubler, in his work, *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, points out that the sonnets provided Shakespeare with a writing laboratory that was largely preparatory for his more sustained flights in the dramas. Hubler declares:

> It is obvious that the young Shakespeare was able to express his most characteristic ideas and attitudes in poems before he was to objectify them in the more troublesome medium of the drama, for it was in poetry that he first achieved distinction, that he first acquired the craftsmanship to take, in Yeat's phrase, "the first plunge away from himself."  

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**Shelley, Percy Bysshe. Ozymandias (1818).**

**OZYMANDIAS**

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Ozymandias was Rameses II, the Egyptian pharaoh who oppressed the children of Israel. The statue of him was at Thebes.

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In this poem Shelley demonstrates his power as a lyrical poet. In the unusual restraint and compression of this poem, Shelley achieves the power of a great poet. The poem has as its narrator a traveler from "an antique land." The experience that the traveler has observed is one that is now quite familiar to the Western world. One recalls how the children of Israel suffered under and were persecuted by Pharaoh. The traveler tells how he saw the wreckage of a great statue that lies half sunk in the sands. The face of the statue reveals a frowning countenance, a curling lip, and a sneering look of one who commands coldly. These facial characteristics reveal to the traveler that the artist-sculptor accurately and faithfully captured what seemed to him to be the arrogance of Ozymandias. In capturing the passions which ruled Ozymandias, the sculptor mocked the mighty monarch. The traveler also observes that the passions which ruled Ozymandias still survive the hand of the sculptor.

In the words that were carved on the pedestal of the statue of Ozymandias, one sees the fatal pride of the ancient Pharaoh revealed. He thought himself to be the "King of Kings," and he advised others to look upon his works and despair of attempting to surpass him. In his line, "Nothing beside remains," Shelley displays masterful control. This simple statement tells the whole story, for
all of the works of Pharaoh have now disappeared from the face of the earth. His slaves, his court, his armies, his cities, his concubines—all have vanished. Nothing remains except the "lone and level sands." Shelley says nothing of an "even-handed justice," of which Shakespeare speaks. Yet, the implications are clear enough. There is implied in the poem the moral sense that Ozymandias could not rule the world with his cruelty. In the twentieth century the dreary record of Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and Khrushchev is somewhat remindful of Shelley's "Ozymandias."

Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. Crossing the Bar (1889). In the thought of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, one sees revealed the evolution of the Victorian mind. In the poetry of Tennyson, whose early work, "Locksley Hall" (1842), reveals a young man who is enthusiastic about science, the full impact of new discoveries and inventions is sensitively recorded. Tennyson's attitude toward science is revealed in "Locksley Hall" as follows:

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When he was nourishing his youth with the fairy tales of science, Tennyson was just thirty-three years of age. Throughout his lifetime Victoria's poet laureate (appointed 1850), was keenly aware of and sensitive to the influence
of Darwin's theory of evolution. By the time he wrote "Crossing the Bar" (1889), Tennyson had cooled in his attitude toward scientific evolution, and in this poem he re-asserts a strong faith in God and his hope for immortality.

The first two stanzas of the poem are as follows:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

For Tennyson the approach of death is imaged in this poem as a call which comes with the sunset and the evening star. When the call comes, the poet asks that there be no "moaning," or roaring, of water breaking across a sand bar so that the symbolic ship of death which will bear him out to sea may not be in danger of running aground. Many readers have interpreted Tennyson's phrase, "And may there be no moaning of the bar" to mean that he was asking that none of his friends come to the shore to moan for his death and departure on the voyage into eternity. The second stanza of the poem stands as clearly refuting any such reading. The use of "But such a tide as moving seems asleep," clearly implies that instead of shallow, dangerous water for navigation, the poet asks that the tide be full and the water deep.
Tennyson's use of "When that which drew from out the boundless deep" to describe human life and the whole evolutionary process is one of the finest and most creative images in the entire poem. In The Explicator, Harry W. Rudman comments upon the line as follows:

Granted that life had its origins in the depths of the ocean. In the course of vast tracts of time man's life has so evolved that he has a soul, the quality of immortality, and a hope in God.74

Hence, there is the hope that when the human soul turns again toward its home, which it left when it came from out the boundless deep, it may see God. Rudman feels that in attributing to life the possibility of evolution to the point that man has developed a soul, Tennyson has achieved the Victorian compromise, the reconciliation of old religion and new science.

In the latter half of the four-stanza poem, Tennyson says:

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.

74 Harry W. Rudman, "Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar,'" The Explicator, VIII (April, 1950), Item 45.
The first line of the third stanza, "Twilight and evening bell," is remindful of the first line of the poem, "Sunset and evening star," both of which suggest the call of death. Tennyson frequently used images of the sea in his poetry and in choosing to employ the phrase, "evening bell," the poet suggests a ship's bell, particularly since he is imaginatively describing the death voyage. In using the simple word dark to describe the oblivion of death, Tennyson had chosen a powerfully poetic image. Since he is so confident that there is a life after death, Tennyson naturally would feel that sad farewells for this voyage are superfluous. By describing the world as a "bourne of Time and Place" Tennyson uses two philosophic terms to symbolize all earthly activity. He sees that the "flood" tide, or full tide, likely will carry his symbolic vessel of death across the bar and far out to sea.

The last two lines of the poem express Tennyson's final faith that once he has begun his voyage of death, he will meet his "Pilot" face to face. Frederick L. Jones, writing in The Explicator, believes that Tennyson has used here a poetic image that lacks literal completeness. Jones suggests that in navigational practice the pilot leaves the ship as soon as it has passed through the harbor channel, or has reached the open sea. If Tennyson's "Pilot" were to leave the ship upon its reaching the open sea, then his ship of death would be without a pilot and thus it would
lack direction. In the opinion of this writer, Tennyson is not in any difficulty whatsoever in his use of the term "Pilot." The Oxford English Dictionary defines pilot as follows: "One who directs the course of a ship ..." This would seem to this writer to be the meaning of pilot as it is used by Tennyson. He is not speaking of a ship's pilot in the sense of one who disembarks from the ship as soon as it leaves the harbor, but instead he is speaking of one who will direct his ship of death into eternity. Tennyson, according to his son, Hallam, meant that the "Pilot" was "That Divine and Unseen Who is always guiding us."

Although Tennyson's poem may be marred with a kind of easy optimism, it, nonetheless, treats a universal theme in an imaginative, consistent manner. Because this poem is so simple, it provides the teacher with a splendid example of a poem that is useful in introducing students to the nature of poetic imagery and symbolism.

Yeats, William Butler. The Lake Isle of Innisfree (1890). Although a full critical analysis of Yeats as a poet and artist does not seem to come within the purview of this study, it would appear that some brief comment upon him as a poet may add to the explication of "The

75Frederick L. Jones, "Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar,'" The Explicator, X (December, 1951), Item 19.
Lake Isle of Innisfree" that will be presented. Yeat's poetic career was characterized by a search for order and meaning. Beginning in the 1890's and ending in the 1930's, Yeats's creative period was paralleled by a general disintegration of faith in religion and in absolutes throughout the Western world. His poetic activity during his career seems to have been an endeavor to compensate for this integration. Yeats constantly strove to give some kind of order to his insights.

At the time Yeats wrote "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" he was about twenty-five years of age. In its entirety the poem is as follows:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey, I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Innisfree is a poetic word for Ireland, specifically an island in Lough Gill, County Sligo, Ireland, where Yeats lived in his younger days. This poem reflects Yeats as a
young man, still influenced by the romanticism of escape, escape from an ugly, unpleasant world of suffering and pain. Rather than to face up to the reality of living in a materialistic world, Yeats wishes to return to the Lake Isle of Innisfree where he will build a small cabin, made of clay and wattles (the twigs of which a thatched roof is made). Since Yeats so specifically tells his reader that he will have nine bean rows, rather than saying he will grow beans at Innisfree, one must assume that he is speaking symbolically at this point. If this be true, then, the nine suggests the possibility of the nine muses who presided over the literature, the arts and sciences in Greek mythology. The nine muses have been regarded as the source of genius or inspiration. Yeats says then, that he will not become a simple rustic, but instead he will cultivate the arts and search for his muse in the aesthetically satisfying surroundings of Innisfree. He will live alone in the romantic setting of a glade that resounds with the activity of the honey bee.

At Innisfree the poet hopes to find serenity, where peace comes "dropping slow." Yeats's power to observe nature is reflected in his impression that at midnight Innisfree is "all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow." Yeats compressed his diction here. In speaking thus of noon, he obviously is saying that in the broad sun of a
clear sky, one gains the impression that the whole world is a purple glow, a reflection from the banks of purple flowers.

The poet tells the reader that he recalls his former days at Innisfree. Always, both night and day, Yeats hears in the ear of his memory the lake water lapping, beckoning to him to return to the isle. When he says, "While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey," Yeats is symbolizing the dull-concrete grayness of the modern city. It is then that he hears the inner voice that calls him back to the beauty and the peace of the Lake Isle of Innisfree.

Clearly, Yeat's solution to the dilemma of the modern city dweller is not an heroic one. Here, the poet would withdraw from the problems which confront modern man. He would seek his genius and he would cultivate the arts in the "bee-loud glade" where he would tend the nine bean rows of the nine muses. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" stands in direct contrast to another great poem by Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium." In the latter, Yeats attempts to solve the dilemma of modern man by the use of personal myth that is combined with symbolism from the Middle Ages. In "Sailing to Byzantium" Yeats does not withdraw to a romantic isle. Rather, he faces up to the problems of old age, decay, and the spiritual solution of old age through imaginative regeneration.
Summary. In presenting the foregoing explications of twenty-six English and American poems the writer makes no claim that the exegeses presented are either final or definitive. In order to clarify and to document various points of view concerning the poems explicated, the writer has quoted from and referred to numerous literary critics who have published works on the poems. The writer has attempted to reflect what seems to him to be the prevailing critical climate concerning each of the poems.

The explications that have been prepared for this chapter have used the method of explication de texte. It is the hope of this investigator that these explications will in some small way contribute to improved reading of literature in the American secondary schools. The writer has shown in Chapters II and III of the present study that the high schools have an increased responsibility and need to continue to teach reading. It is the assumption of this writer that close, careful examination of a poem is one means of meeting the responsibility that the secondary school has for improving reading.

Of the poems explicated in Chapter VI fourteen were English and twelve were American. The English poems range in date of publication from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries. American poems include a period from 1813 (Bryant: "To a Waterfowl") to 1940 (Auden: "The Unknown Citizen").
As was pointed out in Chapter I, the explications of various literary selections in this study are based upon works found in anthologies used in the high schools. The writer analyzed several sets of high-school literature anthologies and from this analysis he selected the poems that have been explicated in Chapter VI.
CHAPTER VII

EXPLICATIONS OF SELECTED PROSE

The Short Story

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. Dr. Heidegger's Experiment (1836). In this short tale by Nathaniel Hawthorne the reader is presented with a psychological analysis of man's endeavor to find the fountain of youth. Today, when the best practitioners of the short story such as Hemingway, Faulkner, and Maugham frequently are more concerned with psychological truth than with literal truth, an acquaintance with the method and intent of Hawthorne provides an excellent introduction to contemporary fiction.

What is Hawthorne's intent and what is his method? In this tale, Hawthorne is concerned with the age-old dream of finding a means by which humankind may attain perpetual youth, or, once youth has vanished, a means by which lost youth may be restored. Hawthorne's career was a search for "emblems," or symbols, which he called "usable truth." To him tangible, external truths were only symbolic or emblematic of deeper, more significant inner truths. In
"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," Hawthorne sought to show how four older persons eagerly attempt to turn back the clock of time by drinking a secret, life-giving potion prepared by the doctor-scientist, Dr. Heidegger. The doctor tells his four friends that the potion will restore their lost youth. The four eagerly drink the champagne-like liquid and, as promised by Dr. Heidegger, all begin to feel the years slipping from their aged and withered frames. Three of the four aged persons are men, and the fourth is a widow. As soon as the elixir of youth takes its effect upon the four, the three old-men-youths begin dancing around the girl-widow, each reacting like a young man of eighteen to her girlish charms. As they struggle for the favor of the girl, the table which bears the container of the elixir of youth is overturned and the contents spill upon the floor. Soon, the four begin fading and before long they have returned to their former states of aged, withered, decayed senility. The foregoing is the bare outline of the story. What does the story mean and how does the author use his method of searching for "emblems"?

To read Hawthorne with understanding, one must read carefully, almost painstakingly. Even the smallest detail often assumes large significance. For example, the first sentence of the story, "That very singular man, old Dr. Heidegger, once invited four venerable friends to meet him in his study," sets the stage for what is to follow and
briefly describes the five characters of the story. Hawthorne tells his reader that Dr. Heidegger is a "very singular man," singular in that he is completely unlike his four aged friends. Dr. Heidegger tells his friends that

For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your permission, therefore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment.

In reaching maturity, Dr. Heidegger has known much of the pain and anguish which is the lot of mankind, and having benefited from his experience he does not choose to go through with it again.

In the first paragraph of his brief tale Hawthorne tells his reader that the four aged persons who drink the elixir of youth have had much trouble in their lives. Mr. Medbourne was a prosperous merchant in his youth but had lost "his all by a frantic speculation." Now he is reduced to being little more than a beggar. Colonel Killigrew wasted his best years, his health and his substance in the pursuit of youthful pleasures. Mr. Gascoigne is a ruined politician, a man of evil fame. Fourth of the doctor's guests is the aged widow Wycherly. Although she is reputed to have been a great beauty in her day, for several years past she has lived in seclusion because of "certain scandalous stories which had prejudiced the gentry of the town
against her." Hawthorne relates that the three gentlemen have all been lovers of the Widow Wycherly, and had once been on the point of cutting each other's throats for her sake.

Having provided a brief glimpse into the lives of his four guests of the doctor, and indeed some understanding of the past of Dr. Heidegger himself, Hawthorne then sets out to locate the setting of his story. The doctor's study is fittingly appropriate for the ghoulish experiment that is to be conducted there. It is a dim, old-fashioned chamber, "festooned with cobwebs, and besprinkled with antique dust." Ancient, black, mysterious books fill the bookcases along the walls. A bronze bust of Hippocrates, Grecian father of medicine, is located on the central bookcase. Hawthorne voices one of his customary ambiguities when he says that "some authorities" relate that Dr. Heidegger consults with Hippocrates in all difficult cases of his practice. In attributing such power to the doctor, Hawthorne symbolically suggests that Dr. Heidegger has the power of necromancy, or black magic. Between two of the bookcases hangs a looking-glass. It is "fabled" that the spirits of all the doctor's deceased patients dwell within its verge and stare him in the face whenever he looks into the mirror.

On the wall in the opposite side of the room there hangs a full-length portrait of a young lady, dressed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a face as faded as her dress. This girl, a half century
earlier, was to have been the bride of Dr. Heidegger. However, on her wedding eve, while suffering from some slight disorder, she drank one of the doctor's prescriptions and died instantly.

Hawthorne then observes that the greatest curiosity in the whole room is the ponderous folio volume, bound in black leather, with massive silver clasps. It is known to be a book of magic. According to legend, once when a chambermaid moved the book to dust under it, the skeleton rattled in the closet, the young lady in the picture stepped one foot upon the floor, and several ghastly faces peeped forth from the mirror; and at the same time, the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned and said, "Forbear!"

From his description of the doctor's study and from the legends circulated about the doctor, it is clear that Dr. Heidegger is a most unusual man. He deals, in magic, has some of the attributes of a man of supernatural powers himself. Of course, it must be kept clearly in mind that Hawthorne himself does not attribute to the doctor any divine or supernatural quality in any literal sense. Hawthorne relies upon legend, fable, myth, and ambiguity as a means of accounting for Dr. Heidegger's gift of magic. Whether Dr. Heidegger actually holds oral communication with the bust of Hippocrates or not is of little importance to Hawthorne. What is important to the artist is the psychological truth that is involved. As a scientist of unusual
ability, Dr. Heidegger may have unlocked "secrets" that man prior to his day had not been able to do. Some of the secrets that the doctor has learned can be used wisely no doubt, or can be used unwisely. Since Dr. Heidegger reputedly deals in black magic, symbolically it may be assumed that he is in league with the devil. However, his discovery of the fountain of youth, if placed in wise hands could bring perpetual human joy. Wrongly and selfishly used, the elixir of youth might create untold wrong.

After Dr. Heidegger's guests are assembled in his study, he tells them that he is inviting them to participate in one of his little experiments. He then demonstrates the efficacy of a potion which he has prepared by tossing into the vase which contains the bubbling liquid an aged and withered rose. Almost instantly the rose alters its color and texture and becomes lovely, young, and fresh. The doctor then tells his guests that the potion will do as much for the human being who will drink it. Although Colonel Killigrew believes not one word of what Dr. Heidegger has said about the magical qualities of the liquid, he is nevertheless keenly interested. The doctor invites his friends to drink the potion, but before doing so he suggests that they draw up a set of rules by which to conduct themselves after the potion has worked its effects.

Since the four guests are all aged and consequently have the benefits of a lifetime of experience, Dr. Heidegger
addresses them saying:

...it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be, if, with your peculiar advantages, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age.

The doctor's four venerable friends make him no answer, except by feeble laughter. Knowing how closely repentance treads upon the heels of sin and error, the four guests feel that it is foolish to think that they should ever go astray again, however young and foolish the elixir may make them. Quite apparently, Hawthorne's "usable truth" is clearly seen at this point. Here are four aged persons, all of whom have experienced life and all of whom have sinned and erred in reaching old age. If moral experience is worth anything at all to man as a means of providing him with a pattern by which to govern his acts, then surely these four persons should know it. To Hawthorne, the sad, lamentable fact is, that many persons presumably are unable to benefit from moral experience. Yet, one must not forget that Dr. Heidegger does not choose to drink the elixir. He, alone, has benefited from his experience in growing old and does not choose to try again.

The four aged persons drink their glasses of the potion and the magic begins its work. Of the effect of the elixir
upon Dr. Heidegger's guests, Hawthorne says:

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sunshine brightening over all their visages at once.

Not satisfied with partial restoration of their vanished youth, the four guests cry out for more of "this wondrous water!" Again, Dr. Heidegger fills their glasses and again they drink the potion at a gulp. Hawthorne points out that their eyes grow bright again, a dark shade deepens in their silvery locks. The Widow Wycherly is now hardly beyond her buxom prime and the men are middle-aged gentlemen.

Immediately, the four guests fall back into their old ways: Mr. Gascoigne begins uttering some of his old political phrases which Hawthorne points out are still as fashionable as they were fifty years ago; Colonel Killigrew sings a jolly bottle song; Mr. Medbourne is busily involved in a calculation of dollars and cents; and the Widow stands curtseying before the mirror, simpering to her own image.

While the four are responding to the elixir of youth in their individual ways, Dr. Heidegger sits in his high-backed, elaborately carved oaken armchair. Hawthorne sees that the doctor has a "gray dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time, whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company." It is apparent that the author treats the doctor symbolically
when he draws the parallel between the scientist and Father Time. With his skill and scientific knowledge, or else through his practice of magic, Dr. Heidegger has indeed disputed the passage of time. Hawthorne never attempts to say whether this miracle has been accomplished by reason or magic.

Not satisfied with achieving middle age, the four drink off a third glass of the miraculous champagne and almost instantly they feel "like new-created beings in a new-created universe." Now they are a group of frolicsome and merry youngsters, almost maddened with exuberant enthusiasm that is typical of youth. Hawthorne tells his reader that the most singular effect of their gaiety is an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been victims.

As is typical of the very young, the youths now gather around the young girl, each protesting his passionate desire for her. Even though the girl struggles to escape her would-be-lovers, she yet manages always to remain within their grasps, "Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turns." The youths, inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, begin to threaten one another. As they struggle to and fro, the table is overturned and the vase is dashed into a thousand pieces. The precious water of youth flows in a bright stream across the floor and vanishes.
The four stand and shiver; "for it seemed as if gray Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years." A strange chill, whether of the body or spirit, creeps over them all. Rapidly all of the youthful charms begin to disappear and the four appear as they were before drinking the wonderful elixir of youth. Dr. Heidegger tells his guests that even though the very fountain of youth should pass his door, he will not stoop to touch it, such is the lesson that the four guests have taught him.

Dr. Heidegger has learned that appearance and reality are not always distinguishable. He has seen the mirrored reflections of the four guests as they dance about crazily in their "youth" and what he has seen tells him that they are still three old men and an old woman. The elixir of youth is deceptive. The four experience a great deception—they think that they can re-live what has already disappeared. And, although they have all sinned and erred in their youths, they have not profited from their experience. Once lost youth is restored, they go back again to the old dance of love and passion. Dr. Heidegger also experienced passion and love in his youth, but he now realizes that should he go back once again to his youth, he will have to establish some rules in order to benefit from his earlier experience.
Hawthorne's use of black magic in "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" had ample precedent. In the doctor-scientist's use of the book of magic, in the youth-giving potion, in the magic mirror, and even in the doctor's dimly lighted study, Hawthorne had a splendid example to follow in Goethe's Faust. According to William Bysshe Stein in his work, Hawthorne's Faust, A Study in the Devil Archetype, Hawthorne had read Goethe for years, admired him, and was greatly influenced by the German poet-dramatist. Concerning the parallel between Hawthorne and Goethe, Stein says:

All the magic paraphernalia of the play are reproduced in Hawthorne's setting. Faust's enchanted mirror is converted into a fitting ornament for Dr. Heidegger's study....The witches's apes and the steaming cauldron that attend the preparation of the rejuvenating liquor are symbolically expressed by the doctor's black book.1

In Goethe's poetic drama, Faust, the hero is an aged scholar who makes a compact with the Devil. In order to gain fuller knowledge of the mystery of existence than he has been able to do in the study of law, medicine, theology, and philosophy, Faust makes a pact with the Devil who is to become his guide in all earthly experience. If Faust ever desires any experience Mephistopheles provides him with enough to say, "Let this moment remain," and then the Devil gains

1 William Bysshe Stein, Hawthorne's Faust, A Study of the Devil Archetype, p. 82.
control of the soul of Faust. In order to make it possible for Faust to enjoy all human experience, Mephisto finds it necessary to take Faust to the Witches' kitchen where a magic potion is prepared which, when drunk by Faust, makes him think every woman is a Helen. In Faust the witches use magic; the cauldron boils and bubbles. In Hawthorne, the author relies upon the black book of magic, and the elixir-of-life potion bubbles like champagne.

In Hawthorne's story the four guests, upon having their lost youth restored, quickly are caught up in the meshes of human passion. In Goethe's Faust, Mephistopheles presents Faust with the youth-giving potion in the hope that he can entangle and enrapture Faust's soul by exciting his sensual passions. The potion further symbolizes the effect of the practical experiences of life upon the human spirit. To Mephisto, practical affairs of life are always intermingled with good and evil. Presumably, Hawthorne followed this pattern in showing that his guests were almost immediately thrust back into their evil ways of bygone days as soon as their lost youth was restored.

The question of believing in the literalness of the details of the story may loom large in the minds of high-school students who read "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." In the opinion of this writer, the teacher should emphasize that Hawthorne is concerned with psychological truth and with the ethical implications of the details, rather than
with any endeavor to deal with magic.\(^2\)

Faulkner, William. *Two Soldiers* (1942). When William Faulkner won the 1949 Nobel Prize for literature, he was the fourth American to be honored with this international award. Before Faulkner, three other Americans—Eugene O'Neill, Sinclair Lewis, and Pearl Buck—had been so honored. Although the Nobel Prize has done much to insure Faulkner's position in American literature, for many critical readers he still remains a controversial figure. In this connection, it is particularly significant to this writer that one of Faulkner's short stories is found in anthologies used by high-school students.

That such novels by Faulkner as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Light in August* are obscure and difficult to read is by now a commonplace. For the inexperienced reader, the most profitable and the least vexatious means of approaching Faulkner is through his short stories. In the short stories, the reader is given insight into the artistry and the mind of Faulkner, and the sense of the story is much easier to grasp. This writer has chosen to explicate a short story by Faulkner because he is a challenging contemporary novelist and short-story writer; he is a Nobel Prize winner; his work is representative of the contemporary American scene;

and he merits inclusion in any list of great American writers.

In Faulkner's "Two Soldiers," the reader is given an immediate insight into the character of the spokesman of the tale. In the first sentence, Faulkner says, "Me and Pete would go down to Old Man Killigrew's and listen to his radio." The "me" is young, the eight-year-old brother of "Pete" Grier from Frenchman's Bend. It is through the eyes of the unnamed lad who is just eight years of age that the action of the story is viewed. The boy is the perceiving mind of the narrative.

In the first paragraph of the story, the reader learns that the characters he will meet in "Two Soldiers" are uneducated youths, curiously interested in radio and in the news they can hear from a loudspeaker to which they listen outside a neighbor's home after dark. The time is the evening of the day on which the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941. From the first page of the short story, it is evident to the perceptive reader that the "me" of the story is a hero worshipper who admires his nineteen-year-old brother, Pete. The lad says of Pete, "...he was nigh twenty and he had done finished the Consolidated last June and he knowed a heap."

After the lad and Pete have heard the news broadcast describing the events at Pearl Harbor, they go home and go to bed. The boy knows that Pete is darkly disturbed
and that he is thinking about what it all means. Of his brother's self-searching, the lad says:

He would lay there, a heap stiller than if he was asleep, and it would be something, I could feel it coming out of him, like he was mad at me even, only I knewed he wasn't thinking about me, or like he was worried about something....

Finally, after several days of thinking about the war, Pete decides that he "has got to go." Faulkner describes this scene between the lad and his idol, Pete, as follows:

"Go where?" I said.
"To that war," Pete said.
"Before we even finish gettin' in the firewood?"
"Firewood, hell," Pete said.
"All right," I said. "When we going to start?"

And, of course, it is this passionate sense of loyalty that the lad feels for his older brother, Pete, that provides Faulkner with his story and even the title for his tale. Pete goes to the war, and the boy in his utter loneliness and through his desperate need for his hero, has to go, too.

Although Pete's "maw" and "pap" are opposed to his going to war, they finally accept the boy's decision. Faulkner reveals the confused, illogical thinking of an uneducated Southerner when he relates paw's reasons why Pete should not have to go to war. In the first place, Pete's father says that the boy is not old enough to be drafted since he is only nineteen (In 1941, draft age was twenty-one years). Second, the country "ain't being
invaded." Third, paw tells Pete that in the last war he, paw, had been drafted "and sent clean to Texas and was held there nigh eight months until they finally quit fighting." Moreover, paw points out that Pete's Uncle Marsh received an actual wound on the battlefield in France in the last war. All of these reasons clearly indicate to paw that Pete has no moral obligation to go to war.

Pete brushes aside his mother's and his father's reasons for not volunteering for service in the army. When preparations for his departure are completed, Pete plans to catch the six a.m., bus for Memphis where he expects to join the army. Faulkner describes Pete's departure with detachment but his words carry an emotional impact that is poignantly touching when he says:

She put in the shoe box of fried chicken and biscuits and she put the Bible in, too, and then it was time to go. We didn't know until then that maw wasn't going to the bus. She just brought Pete's cap and overcoat, and still she didn't cry no more, she just stood with her hands on Pete's shoulders and she didn't move, but somehow, and just holding Pete's shoulders, she looked as hard and fierce as when Pete had turned toward me in the bed last night and tole me that anyway I was all right.

Then, Faulkner suggests the intense pride of the Southerner when he has Pete's mother fiercely declare, "You ain't rich and the rest of the world outside Frenchman's Bend never heard of you. But your blood is good as any blood anywhere, and don't you never forget it." This is Southern pride; it
is provincial; it may even be fatal pride, but as Faulkner sees the South, this is the way it is.

That night when the young boy goes to bed the loneliness of the room that he has shared with Pete is more than the lad can bear. He cannot stand the room without Pete there to guide him and to explain everything to him. The lad rises quietly from his bed, drops his shoes out of the window just as he has seen Pete do so many times, climbs out, puts on his shoes and starts out on foot for Jefferson, twenty-two miles away. Faulkner's statement of what it means for a child of eight to walk twenty-two miles at night on a lonely, dark highway marks him for the artist that he is. The boy is a hero worshipper and he somehow knows that true heroes do not complain about hardship and tired feet.

The "Law" asks him where he is going when he arrives in Jefferson the next morning just before sun-up. Since the lad insists that he has to reach Memphis to see his brother, the "Law" obtains the help of two ladies in fur coats who are obviously social workers. Before they can help the youth they must obtain from him a case history. Faulkner consistently draws his character sketch of the little "soldier." The lad puts on a bold front of bravado in the presence of the law officer and the social workers in Jefferson. Finally, they present him with a ticket and he boards the bus for Memphis.
The young "soldier" arrives at the army camp in Memphis and inquires about Pete Grier but nobody seems to know him. The lad tells the corporal that he is going to join the army and go to Pearl Harbor with his brother Pete. The army corporal sees that the boy is confused and attempts to force him out of the office. The lad opens his pocket knife and stabs the corporal in the hand. During the scuffle between the lad and the corporal, an officer enters the office and sees what is happening. Faulkner reveals a keen understanding of human nature when he has the officer say:

"Here, here. Put your knife up, feller. None of us are armed. A man don't knife-fight folks that are barehanded."

The officer in addressing the lad as though he were a man, treats him like the "soldier" that the lad imagines himself to be. He tells the officer that he has come to see his brother Pete and to join the army so that he can be with Pete. The officer sends for Pete, who is ready to be shipped to a training camp but whose train has not yet departed.

Faulkner's deadpan use of "Two Soldiers" as the title for his little short story is a deft, tender touch. The little Grier boy is a brave soldier. He faces the uncertainties of a lonely, twenty-two mile hike in darkness. He is willing to fight for a bus ticket; he is willing to "take on" the whole U. S. Army, if necessary, in order to join his brother-hero.
Pete is summoned by the lieutenant and when he sees his younger brother in Memphis he wants to know why he is there. The lad tells Pete that he has to join the army to be with him. Pete dissuades the youth, sends him back home, giving him a dollar for bus fare. The soldier calls an elderly lady to look after the boy and she takes him to her apartment hotel. It develops that this lady is the wife of a soldier who has a "silver-colored bird" on each shoulder. The woman introduces the lad to her husband, Colonel McKellogg. The Colonel sends for his car and orders the soldier to take the boy home to Frenchman's Bend. Faulkner concludes the story thus:

At this rate, before I knowed it we would be home again, and I thought about me riding up to Frenchman's Bend in this big car with a soldier running it, and all of a sudden I begun to cry. I never knowed I was fixing to, and I couldn't stop it. I set there by that soldier, crying. We was going fast.

Quite obviously, Faulkner's title refers to Pete and his younger brother, who is only eight years of age. As Faulkner develops the character of each of these "soldiers," both are brave, both face hardship courageously, both are resolute in carrying out their plans once they have been formulated. Both "soldiers" have a high sense of loyalty, Pete to the country, and the lad to Pete. Both "soldiers" reach their decisions to go to war after a long mental struggle and much thought over the matter. Thus, the decision
must be regarded as an ethical one, although with the lad, the decision is based on loyalty to his hero, Pete.

Faulkner reveals the perceiving mind of the lad with sensitive insight and understanding. He does not credit the boy with any profound or philosophical thoughts. What the lad does and thinks is believable in a boy of eight. The lad is capable of strong affection for his older brother and he shows this affection.

Faulkner's use of the perceiving mind of a young boy is not with precedent in the work of this author. In his excellent short story, "Barn Burning," the central intelligence through whose eyes the story occurs is Sarty Snopes, also a young boy and a hero worshipper. Sarty is loyal to his no-good father, a lout and a barn burner, but in the end Sarty sees the truth about his father and warns the farmer whose barn his father next proposes to burn. In many ways, the Sarty Snopes of "Barn Burning" is the Grier lad of "Two Soldiers," more fully, symbolically, developed.

Some of Faulkner's most difficult and complex characterization as well as symbolic meaning is found in his novel, The Sound and the Fury in which the details of the story are told through the intelligence, or mind, of Benjay, an idiot. Reading such stories as "Two Soldiers" and "Barn Burning" is good as an introduction to the work of William Faulkner, who has created his own myth and his own world in
Yoknapatawpha County, a mythical section of the state of Mississippi.3

The Drama

Shakespeare, William. Macbeth (1606). No single literary composition by William Shakespeare appears in high-school literature anthologies more often than does his play, Macbeth. The survey of high-school literature anthologies conducted by this investigator revealed that it is safe to assume that most high-school graduates today have some acquaintance with Shakespeare's Macbeth. Since this drama is so widely read in high-school English classes, it seems the logical choice for an explication.

Macbeth is notably suited for reading in high schools for several reasons. In none of the other major tragedies—Hamlet, Othello, Lear—does swiftness of action seem to characterize the treatment as it does in Macbeth. In actual length, Macbeth is the shortest of the plays; thus it can be read more quickly than any of the other tragedies. Macbeth is notably suited to the study of such artistic

3 For additional help on William Faulkner, the following works are suggested:
Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, William Faulkner, a Critical Appraisal.
Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner.
Irving Howe, William Faulkner, a Critical Study.
characteristics as tone, image, and symbol as contributory to the total effect of a literary work. In Macbeth the mood of the drama is that of darkness. The play opens upon the dark moorlands of Forres in Scotland with the crash of thunder and with lightning playing upon the landscape, providing an atmosphere that is appropriate for the drama. When Banquo and Macbeth cross the moor they do so in semi-darkness. The dominant tone of the drama is that of gloom. Duncan is murdered at night during a storm while he sleeps. Banquo is murdered in the early evening, but after the light of day has failed. Macbeth struggles with his conscience at night; the ghost of Banquo walks in the night; and Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep at night while her tortured soul speaks forth its guilt.

Perhaps in no other play does Shakespeare employ his imagery and symbolism in such powerful, and moving verse as he does in Macbeth. Throughout the drama, fear and hate seem to predominate. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, in Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, sums up the place fear occupies in Macbeth, saying:

The whole play of Macbeth may indeed be regarded in one sense as an "image" of fear, and I believe no man could have written it just as it is, had he not believed fear to be the most evil and life-draining of all emotions, constricting, withering,
paralysing, and so the very opposite of love, which is expansive, fruitful, vitalising.⁴

For the high-school reader, Macbeth is a simple play. Unlike King Lear, Shakespeare's Macbeth has no subplot to distract the inexperienced reader. The dramatist focuses his attention upon an essentially noble man and his wife and he weaves the web of their destruction. These are but a few of the reasons why Macbeth is particularly suitable for reading in the high-school English class.

The action of the play begins with the appearance of the three witches. To G. L. Kittredge, the witches are "great powers or ministers of fate"; thus they introduce a tone of dark foreboding into the drama from its very beginning. In Anglo-Saxon the word wyrd means fate. The "Wyrd Sisters" are thus to be regarded as ministers of fate. Kittredge believes that the witches are the ruling forces of the tragedy.⁵

The function of the opening scene of the play is subject to controversy. One theory calls the scene pure stagecraft, that is, Shakespeare uses the witches purely as a means of

⁴Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, p. 156.

⁵G. L. Kittredge, ed., Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare, p. 891.
quieting the Globe audience, of setting the tone of the drama, and of preparing the audience to meet the hero of the play. Another view of the role of the witches in the opening scene is that they serve as the instruments of fate, indicating to the audience that supernatural forces will rule Macbeth throughout the action. Still other critics believe that the witches symbolize the force of evil that will dominate the life of Macbeth.

Act I, Scene ii, transfers the action to the camp of King Duncan, ruling monarch of Scotland, who, with his officers and soldiers, is conversing with the bleeding sergeant. The sergeant is describing the battle that has just ended, in which Macbeth has slain the traitorous Macdonwald. The sergeant refers to Macbeth as "brave," "valour's minion" (darling), and relates that Macbeth has "unseam'd" Macdonwald from "the nave to th' chaps." King Duncan is pleased that his cousin Macbeth has fought so bravely on his behalf, referring to Macbeth as "valiant counsin." Duncan pronounces the death sentence upon the ally of Macdonwald, the traitorous Thane of Cawdor, and informs his officers that Macbeth shall now become the Thane of Cawdor, a title of nobility.

Act I, Scene iii, returns the action to the heath, and there the three witches appear a second time. They are dancing about as Macbeth enters, accompanied by Banquo. Significantly, Banquo sees and speaks to the witches first.
Shakespeare makes clear that the witches and their promises are not merely a figment of the imagination of Macbeth. Banquo sees them and hears them. Greeting Macbeth, the witches address him Thane of Cawdor and "king hereafter." With this prophecy Macbeth seems "rapt withal." Why is Macbeth so preoccupied with the promises of the witches? Has he long harbored thoughts of ascending the throne? Has he thought of catching the "nearest way," the murder of Duncan, to the crown? Do the witches now state what Macbeth has long been thinking?

The witches tell Banquo that he shall be lesser but greater than Macbeth, that he shall get kings, though he be none. In effect, the witches prophesy that Banquo's offspring shall become kings but Macbeth's shall not. The witches disappear and the king's messengers greet Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor, thus partially fulfilling the first prophecy of the witches.

Act I, Scene iv. The action goes back to Duncan's camp. Malcolm and Donalbain, sons of Duncan, are in the presence of the monarch. Malcolm informs his father that the traitor Cawdor has been executed. Macbeth enters, goes directly before the king, bows to the ground, and says:

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it pays itself. Your highness' part
Is to receive our duties; and our duties
Are to your throne and state children and servants,
Which do but what they should by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour.
The irony that is present in this speech marks Shakespeare at the height of his art. Macbeth is here presented as the dutiful and humble servant of the crown. The newly-appointed Thane of Cawdor displays his loyalty and pays honour to the king.

Act I, Scene v. Lady Macbeth is reading her lord's letter as the scene opens. Presumably, Lady Macbeth has long cherished ambition for her husband to become king of Scotland. She reveals an important aspect of Macbeth's character when she imaginatively addresses him as follows:

Yet do I fear thy nature.
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win.

Lady Macbeth knows her husband well. She fears that his love of humanity will prevent him from taking destiny in his own hands in order to reach the kingship.

Act I, Scene vi. It is late afternoon outside the great Castle of Inverness. As Duncan approaches Macbeth's castle, where he expects to be a guest for the night, he feels a sense of peace, quiet, and beauty. He is greeted quite formally by Lady Macbeth who speaks with great dignity and humility as she welcomes the monarch to the castle. The king feels that he is among true friends and replies warmly,
asking his hostess to conduct him to Macbeth.

Act I, Scene vii. This scene is the climax of the first act. Macbeth is debating whether or not he will assassinate his king. Macbeth is represented as a sensitive man, possessing powers of deduction which enable him to project himself far enough into the future to see the possible outcome of Duncan's murder. Macbeth cites the following reasons which argue against the deed:

This even-handed justice
Commends th' ingredience of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject—
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murtherer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd against
The deep damnation of his taking off.

There can be no doubt that Macbeth is fully aware of the moral import of the deed he contemplates. He clearly sees the treachery involved. To Shakespeare's audience the person of the king was sacred, since he ruled by virtue of divine right. Thus, if Macbeth kills Duncan he violates the trust reposed in him as host. He betrays the trust given him as a true and loyal subject of the king. Finally, Macbeth realistically says to himself that the only justification he can offer for murdering Duncan is "Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself/ And falls on th' other side." Significantly, Macbeth reveals the nature of his
own tragic flaw when he refers to his "vaulting ambition."

Even as Macbeth wavers between doing and not doing the deed, Lady Macbeth enters and proceeds to convince her husband that killing Duncan can have no possible repercussion unfavorable to the two of them. Lacking Macbeth's imaginative insight, Lady Macbeth is unable to foresee the consequences which may result from Duncan's murder.

Act II. The time is after midnight. Duncan has gone to his rest. Banquo, who cannot sleep, walks about in a court at Inverness. He meets Macbeth and seeks to engage his fellow general in conversation concerning the witches they saw the previous day. Macbeth puts off Banquo, who bids his host goodnight.

Lady Macbeth prepares the way for Duncan's murder by drugging the possets (nightcaps) of the king's grooms. Macbeth, alone, thinking of the deed that he must soon commit if he is to achieve his ambition, sees the handle of a bloody dagger extended to him. In the soliloquy that begins, "Is this a dagger which I see before me," Macbeth reveals yet another facet of his complex nature as he is all but horrified at the thought of what he is about to do.

Lady Macbeth returns to tell him that she has drugged the king's grooms, who now mock their charge with their drunken snores. All is ready for the murder. Macbeth goes to Duncan's room, and Lady Macbeth observes that she would
have killed Duncan herself had the king not so looked like her own father as he lay sleeping.

Macbeth comes back from the king's quarters, his hands dripping blood, reminding him of hangman's hands. The two now carry on their conversation in hoarse whispers. They hear the owl scream and the crickets cry. Macbeth becomes increasingly horrified as he comes to a full realization of what he has done. In one of the most pitiably moving and eloquent speeches in the language Macbeth cries out:

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murther sleep."—the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

So awesome does his deed seem to Macbeth that he is now all but in a trance. Lady Macbeth attempts to draw Macbeth back to the practical requirements of the moment. She tells him to take the daggers back to the room in which Duncan lies since he has accidentally carried them away from the scene of the murder. But Macbeth cannot face the horror of that room again. Lady Macbeth then takes the daggers, goes to Duncan's room, and smears the grooms with their king's blood. Although she tells her husband that a little water will clear them of their foul deed, symbolically the blood of Duncan will never be washed from her hands.

Two noblemen, Macduff and Lennox, arrive early at
Duncan's quarters to awaken their king, as the monarch has directed them to do before retiring the previous night. The castle porter hears their knocking and in a drunken stupor he imagines that he is gatekeeper in hell. His drunken observations on life provide dramatic relief from the tensions of the preceding scene and the horrors of the "discovery" scene which is to follow. This scene of the drunken porter well illustrates Shakespeare's use of the theatrical technique known as the doctrine of contraries. Shakespeare frequently provides a moment of light between two scenes of horror or terror.

Macduff goes to awaken his king and discovers that Duncan is dead. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth play their parts well in the scene that follows. Macbeth rushes to the king's room to slay the sleeping grooms, pretending for the sake of the noblemen that he cannot permit the murderers to live. Lady Macbeth faints. Donalbain and Malcolm, sons of the king, sense that the grooms did not kill their father. Fearing for their own lives, they make a hasty departure from Inverness.

Act II is concluded with a scene (iv) in which an old man, Ross, and Macduff discuss the events which have occurred since Duncan's murder. These men recall that on the night that Duncan was slain an owl killed a falcon; Duncan's horses attempted to eat each other and broke loose
from their stalls to oppose mankind. All of these occurrences were against nature, inexplicable. In describing these examples of subversion in nature, Shakespeare is the myth-maker who symbolically suggests that in like manner, the killing of Duncan was also a subversion of man's natural self.

Macbeth goes to Scone, traditional coronation site of Scottish kings, to be invested as the new King of Scotland. Neither Ross nor Macduff go to Scone to attend the investiture of their friend Macbeth.

Act III. The opening scene of Act III presents a great feast day. Macbeth is now king, residing in the royal palace at Forres. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have planned a great state dinner at which Banquo is to be honored. It will be remembered that Banquo accompanied Macbeth when first the witches made the prophecies that are being fulfilled in the action of the drama. Banquo understands Macbeth perhaps better than any other of the persons of the drama with the exception of Lady Macbeth. Because of the revelation of the witches, Banquo likewise has greater reasons than any other nobleman in Scotland to suspect Macbeth of Duncan's murder.

The king and queen meet Banquo, invite him to the dinner which they say is being given that evening in his honor. Macbeth inquires of Banquo where he will be during
the day and whether or not his son Fleance will be with him. Banquo replies that he and Fleance will go riding, but they will return to the castle just before dinner.

True, Macbeth has achieved his ambition. He now wears the crown, but the crown does not sit on his head comfortably nor easily. He is afraid, insecure, knowing that the witches have given greater promise to Banquo than to himself. Symbolically, Shakespeare has here juxtaposed the forces of good and evil as personified in Banquo and Macbeth, respectively. Macbeth cannot feel at ease as long as Banquo is alive.

In a park near the castle Macbeth's hired assassins intercept the good Banquo and his son Fleance as they return from their ride. Banquo is slain but Fleance is able to flee from the murderers. With Fleance alive, the prophecy of the witches can come true—Banquo can get kings even though he will never be one. Within the castle the state dinner has begun. Macbeth directs the members of his court to sit, each according to his degree. As he is about to sit, the king sees one of the murderers standing at the door. He goes to him and learns that Banquo is slain, but Fleance lives. In order to free himself from blame for the murder of Banquo, the king publicly expresses his regrets that the chief guest is late for dinner.

The ghost of Banquo enters the banquet room and takes a seat at the table, unnoticed by all except Macbeth. Upon
first seeing the ghost of Banquo, Macbeth cries out, "Which of you have done this?" He thinks at first that someone has sought to play a gruesome practical joke by bringing to his table the corpse of Banquo. None of those present except Macbeth sees the ghost. The sight of the gory locks all but drives Macbeth mad; he is crazed with fear. Because the king acts so unaccountably strange, Lady Macbeth dismisses the guests.

Macbeth tries but fails to find any release from his agonized sense of guilt. Now he has the blood of his king and his closest friend on his hands. For such a man who has known what Macbeth has known, what relief is there? To whom can such a man turn? Macbeth finds his answers to these questions when he remembers that the witches once told him his future. Perhaps they can guide him out of the maze in which he now finds himself. As A. C. Bradley says in *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Macbeth "...will know by the worst means, the worst. He has no longer any awe of them."  

Act IV. Macbeth seeks out the witches, finds them in a cavern, presided over by pale Hecate, goddess of sorcery. Macbeth asks the witches to tell his future, and they warn him to beware Macduff. They tell him that no man born of woman can harm him, and finally they promise Macbeth that

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he will never be vanquished until Birnam Wood shall come to high Dunsinane Hill.

Since he has been warned not to trust Macduff, the king decides that he will surprise the lord's castle and put his wife and children to the sword. Macduff has gone to England to help Malcolm organize an army. The butchery of Macduff's wife and children is completely purposeless, but it reveals how far toward complete disintegration Macbeth has gone. So steeped in slaughter is Macbeth that he now resorts to killing a helpless woman and her children to appease his lust for blood and power. All of the evil nature within Macbeth is now loosed and he becomes a willful, arrogant tyrant, dreaded by everyone and a terror to his country.

In England Shakespeare shows Macduff in the company of Malcolm, who at first does not trust Macduff. Macduff, finally convinces the rightful heir to the Scottish throne that his intentions are to help raise an army in order to free Scotland from the oppressor Macbeth. It is at this time that a messenger from Scotland arrives to tell Macduff that Macbeth has slaughtered Macduff's wife and all his children.

Act V. Macbeth leaves Lady Macbeth to go out into the country around the castle to gather together soldiers whom he will use in the defense of Dunsinane, his castle. Lady Macbeth is left alone in the castle, alone with her
conscience and her sense of guilt. Lady Macbeth has acted strangely, and in order to attempt to learn the nature of her trouble a doctor and a gentlewoman have hidden themselves in Lady Macbeth's quarters in order to allow the doctor to observe her strange conduct.

In a great and moving scene Lady Macbeth enters, asleep even while walking, and bearing in her hand a lighted candle. The gentlewoman informs the doctor that Lady Macbeth keeps a candle by her side all the time. The queen acts as though she is washing her hands although she is quite obviously asleep. Then she says:

Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

Although Lady Macbeth lacks her husband's imaginative sensitivity, her guilt is slowly destroying her through the workings of her conscience. As long as she has had Macbeth to lean upon, she has been able to derive strength from him. Now, she must face her moral guilt alone.

Macbeth returns to his castle, only to be told soon thereafter that the English forces are approaching Dunsinane. There is a cry from within and soon thereafter a messenger comes into the presence of the king to announce that the queen is dead. Macbeth reveals his ambivalent nature—both good and evil, both sensitive and callous—when he replies, "She should have died hereafter." The complete lack of any
sense of loss or regret at his wife's death is only an indication of Macbeth's deterioration. This is what life has come to mean to this essentially good and excellent man who has lived outside a moral order. Life is just a brief candle, a poor player who struts and frets his hour upon the stage. "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Macbeth still has the two promises of the witches that he is invulnerable until Birnam Wood comes to high Dunsinane Hill and no man born of woman can harm him. The first of the promises soon fades, however, when a messenger appears before Macbeth to tell him that Birnam Wood is indeed marching toward Dunsinane Hill. The soldiers have cut trees to use as camouflage. Macbeth counts on the thick walls of his castle for his defense, but his soldiers have little desire to defend a man so ruthless and tyrannical. They give up the castle to the invaders, but Macbeth has the will and the courage to fight on alone.

Macduff confronts Macbeth, and the king hesitates to engage him in battle. The blood of Macduff's wife and children is already on Macbeth's head. Macbeth tells Macduff that he is invulnerable to any man born of woman. Macduff replies, telling Macbeth that he, Macduff, was untimely ripped from his mother's womb. All of the charm of the witches' prophecy is now gone, and so Macbeth's hopes for triumph in spite of his sins and wrongdoings have vanished.
Macbeth is still the tragic hero, even though all is lost. He will not surrender to be mocked at by the people. He throws his shield in front of his body and closes with Macduff as they exit fighting. When Macduff returns to the stage, he brings with him the tyrant's head. Justice has done her work.

Macbeth is brave, valiant, and glorious when first he enters the drama. He is of royal blood, a man worthy of the crown. His vaulting ambition provokes him into committing murder to realize that ambition. Murder leads to murder. In this way a great man and a good wife destroy not only the world they seek to create, but they wreck their own lives. In the larger sense, Shakespeare has presented in Macbeth a conflict between the forces of good and evil. The innocent suffer, but in time tyranny is put down and justice is restored.

Macbeth is a careful study of the incalculability of evil as it works upon the human spirit. Had Macbeth been completely callous, he might have held his passions in check and continued to reign. He was sensitive, however, and it is in his imaginative grasp of his own guilt and the dark terror of his deeds that his tragic nature lies.

Wilder, Thornton. Our Town (1938). A Pulitzer Prize winner in 1938, Thornton Wilder has written a classic among America stage dramas in Our Town. Wilder set out to write a
simple, nostalgic account of life in a typically American small town. He chose as his setting, Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. The time extends from 1901 to 1913. By his use of an almost bare stage, pantomime, and a stage director who serves as narrator, speaking both to the audience and the persons of the drama, Wilder produced what was in 1938 and experimental drama.

Today, Our Town is generally regarded as a modern allegory, "A succession of events illustrating a general idea," as Wilder, himself, says in Thoughts of Playwriting. Although many contemporary playwrights deny it, Wilder maintains in this Thoughts that all drama is essentially allegory. "The myth, the parable, the fable, are the fountainheads of all fiction," he declares.

In Our Town, Wilder achieves his allegory in various ways. In the development of a plot of Our Town, Wilder uses the flow of events to suggest allegory. The narrative sequence from morning until night, from the cradle to the grave, from the marriage ceremony to the funeral, provides the allegoric structure of the drama. Thus, as Francis Fergusson points out in an article in the Sewanee Review, Wilder bases the three acts of "his play upon the pathos of the great commonplaces of human life, birth, marriage, and
The tender and simple love story of George Gibbs and Emily Webb provides the plot thread of Our Town. Since Wilder is frankly treating his characters allegorically, he does not attempt to develop any profound treatment of either George or Emily. They are dramatically developed in the spirit of make-believe and not in a true-to-life sense. From the very beginning of the drama, the stage manager enlists the audience's help in carrying forward the spirit of make-believe. There is no scenery, no curtain; the stage properties are few. The characters in Our Town are generalized rather than strongly individualized. Thus, the various characters become symbolic of youthful love, wisdom, experience, cynicism, parenthood, and social service.

Act I. The first act shows a day in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, longitude: forty-two degrees, forty minutes; latitude: seventy degrees, thirty-seven minutes. The day is May 7, 1901. The time is just before dawn. The stage manager describes the town and tells the audience that the first character to appear will be Dr. Gibbs. He has just come from the Polish Town across the tracks where he has

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delivered twins to Mrs. Goruslawski. As Dr. Gibbs walks along the main street of Grover's Corners, he meets Joe Crowell, Jr., the newsboy. After Joe has gone on down Main Street, hurling imaginary newspapers into doorways, Howie Newsome, the milkman, comes along and exchanges greetings with Dr. Gibbs. Another day in the life of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, has begun.

At the Gibbs home, the wife of the doctor already has breakfast prepared when he arrives. George and Rebecca, the Gibbs children, come down for their breakfast and then leave for school in the company of the Webb children, who live across the way. Such are the daily routines of the people who inhabit Grover's Corners.

The warm day passes and the children return home from school. Emily Webb walks down the street, pretending that she is a great lady. George Gibbs, on his way to play baseball, stops to chat with Emily. George tells Emily how much he admires her work at school, and also says that he does not understand how she can spend so much time doing her homework. Flattered by George's fine compliments, Emily tells George that she will help him with his algebra. Emily runs home to ask her mother if she thinks that Emily is pretty enough to attract boys.

The stage manager then introduces Professor Willard of the state university and asks him to comment briefly upon
Grover's Corners. Professor Willard says that the town is located on a shelf of land, "Devonian basalt," that is more than two or three hundred million years old. Allegorically, Wilder is showing that this town is universal and timeless. Similarly, the stage effect of symbolism through suggestion is carried out when George and Emily mount two stepladders in a pantomime which indicates that they have gone to their rooms to study. Near the end of act one, Wilder employs allegory when he refers to a letter that was addressed to Jane Crofut from her minister. The address: "Jane Crofut; The Crofut Farm; Grover's Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America; Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God." Francis Fergusson, mentioned earlier, believes that Wilder has faith that even though life in Grover's Corners is routine and insignificant, the people live in the mind of God. There is a sense of eternity here in Grover's Corners.

Act II. Wilder says that the first act was "the Daily Life. This act is called Love and Marriage." Three years have elapsed since Act I. During these years George Gibbs and Emily Webb have become sweethearts and now they are to be married. On the morning of his wedding day George goes across the way to the Webb home. Since Emily has not yet come down for breakfast, Mr. Webb is able to talk to George about marriage. He tells George that no one can advise
anybody else on matters so personal as marriage.

Mrs. Gibbs is worried that George is not old enough for the responsibilities of marriage. She doubts that George will be able to earn a living. Yet, when she and Dr. Gibbs remember how they had had similar worries during their first years of marriage, they decide that George and Emily also will learn to make a success of their lives.

George and Emily are married, and Grover's Corners loses one of its best baseball players in George Gibbs, since George must now take a job to earn a livelihood.

Act III. This time, so the stage manager says, nine years have gone by since the last act ended. It is now summer, 1913. Gradual changes have occurred in Grover's Corners. Horses are becoming rarer, and the farmers are coming to town in Fords. Young people want to dress more and more like the city folks.

The stage manager tells the audience that he is now looking at the cemetery high on the hill above Grover's Corners. He points out the graves of Mrs. Gibbs, Mr. Stimson, organist at the Congregational Church, and Mrs. Soames, who enjoyed the wedding of George and Emily. Wilder's allegory is strongly asserted when the stage manager says:

I don't care what they say with their mouths—everybody knows that something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars...everybody
knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human things.

At first, when the dead come to the cemetery, they are still interested in the affairs in Grover's Corners. In a short time, however, the stage manager says that they begin to lose interest in things on earth.

A new grave is being prepared in the cemetery for the body of Emily Gibbs, who has died in giving birth to her second child. Her first child was a little boy, now about four years old. From offstage a group begins singing "Blessed Be the Ties That Bind." Suddenly Emily appears among the dead, wearing a white dress, hair combed down in back and held by a white ribbon like that of a little girl.

Conversing with the dead, Emily learns that life here in the cemetery is free from much of the trouble which besets the living. She is told by Mr. Stimson that on earth the living "move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those...of those about. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion or another." Still bitter in death, Simon Stimson sees the ignorance, blindness, and folly of the living. Emily also finds much pain in recalling how unaware she has been of the meaning and wonder of life.
Emily finally goes to her resting place in the cemetery. When night comes she sees that George has brought some flowers to place on her grave. She feels pity for George and for all the rest of the living, for she now knows how little they really understand the wonderful gift that is life itself.

The Novel

Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885). In attempting to assess the factors that make Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn a great novel, Lionel Trilling states that its achievement lies "primarily in its power of telling the truth." Trilling thinks that in Huckleberry Finn the truth is more intense, more fierce, and more complex than it is in Tom Sawyer. There is truth in Huckleberry Finn both for the boy and for the adult reader. That is why the novel can be read throughout a lifetime and with each successive reading one can find something new. One of the tests of a great novel is its inexhaustibleness. Huckleberry Finn meets this test admirably.

In The Green Hills of Africa Ernest Hemingway declares, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn." Hemingway admires

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8Lionel Trilling, "Introduction," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. vi.
Twain's realism, his ability to create characters with strong vigor. He credits Twain with mastering a pure American idiom.

One of the elements of *Huckleberry Finn* which gives the novel an unmistakable quality of greatness is the development of the character of Huck himself. While it is true that Huck speaks the dialect of the uneducated Southerner and believes in superstition and "tokens," he sees and understands a truth that goes beyond his cultural outlook. In *Huck Finn*, Mark Twain created a composite of all boys—idealistic, adventurous, mischievous, yet loving truth and seeing through the shams of adult hypocrisy. Huck is lovable and yet pitiable at the same time. Almost a waif, Huck knows the loneliness of an original thinker. His insight into Aunt Polly and Widow Douglas leads Huck to observe that, even though the Widow Douglas lectures him about the evils of smoking, she uses snuff. But as Huck says, "Of course that was all right, because she done it herself."

Huck was aware of the vast difference between appearance and reality. He saw the injustice of slavery with its buying and selling of human beings, although his society engaged in the practice. He saw the bovinity of the mob, even while being a member of that mob. He looked at feuding with skepticism, even though his elders were killing one another in a senseless family feud so old nobody could remember how it started.
Even when Huck decides not to turn Nigger Jim in as a runaway slave and feels that he will go to hell as a result, he says:

It was awful thought and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.

In Huck's selfless decision to reject his entire social and cultural conditioning in response to a higher truth, one sees revealed a capacity for original thought. In his simple, boyish outlook, Huck decides to save Jim on moral and personal grounds. Try as he might to find reasons for not liking Jim, Huck cannot. On the contrary, all he can do is to find reasons for saving Jim.

The plot of *Huckleberry Finn* is thinly held together by the trip down the river. Even here, however, Twain turns what may have been a weakness into one of the great strengths of the novel. In his symbolic journey toward freedom, Huck becomes something of an epic figure. Like Aeneas, Huck makes a journey on which he meets many kinds of experiences and types of human beings. The river gives the plot direction and it is always to the river that Huck returns after sallies
into the human society that lives along the river. Like Don Quixote, Huck ventures into human affairs to learn of man’s inhumanity to man, man’s stupidity, and his cowardice. By means of the river and its ever-shifting panoramas, Twain gives his novel variety, novelty, and the spirit of adventure. On the river or near its banks, Huck meets King Solomon, the Duke and the Dauphin, the Shepherdsons, and the Grangerfords, Colonel Sherburn and Boggs, and Mary Jane. To Huck, the river is dark, mysterious, moody, yet poetically beautiful.

Part of the greatness of *Huckleberry Finn* lies in Twain’s use of satire in pointing out the ignorance and stupidity which govern the lives of many of the people who live along the track of Huck’s journey downstream. Twain satirizes slavery, feuding, brotherly love, mob psychology, man’s cowardice, royalty, superstition, orthodoxy, and evangelism in *Huckleberry Finn*. When the Grangerfords take Huck in, he goes to church with them on Sunday where they hear a sermon on brotherly love. Huck tells the experience as follows:

Next Sunday we all went to Church, about three miles, everybody a-horseback. The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching—all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say
about faith and good works and free grace...
that it did seem to me to be one of the
roughest Sundays I had run across yet.

Twain's use of satire in *Huckleberry Finn* is a prologue
to the misanthropy which was later to be expressed in *What
Is Man?* (1906) and *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916). Twain
has Colonel Sherburn address the lynching mob that has come
to his house after he has killed Boggs, saying: "The average
man's a coward." This expression and similar ones of equal
bitterness become Twain's intellectual theme song in later
years. Speaking of Twain's bitterness, Bernard deVoto, in
his work, *Mark Twain at Work*, observes:

For *What Is Man?* is not only a treatise on man's
instability, weakness, cowardice, cruelty, and
degradation. It is not only an assault on the
illusions of free will, integrity, decency, and
virtue with which mankind makes tolerable its
estate....But it is much more than that. For
clearly *What Is Man?* is also a plea for pardon.
In describing man's helplessness, it pleads
that man cannot be blamed. In asserting man's
cowardice, it asserts also that man is not
responsible.  

In *Huck Finn* the animal-like character of the mob is revealed
at the murder of Boggs. Twain even goes so far as to say
that an army is just a mob. Many readers of Twain's novel
are not fully aware of the underlying bitterness which seems
to characterize one aspect of his nature.

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Yet, there is another Mark Twain—tender, sentimental, idealistic. This Twain is, in his own words, the lovable "phunny fella." In _Huckleberry Finn_, this tender aspect of Twain's personality is reflected in Huck's constant concern for the welfare of his fellow human beings. Huck is always "in a sweat" over the predicament of someone. Huck sympathizes with the supposedly drunken man who amuses the circus audience as he attempts to ride a horse. When Huck imprisons the men on the wrecked steamboat, his first worry is that of how to get someone to rescue them. And when Huck and Tom reach the hilltop at night and look down into the village where they see three or four lights burning, Huck sympathizes with those who have sick folks.

In some ways Huck Finn has the qualities of an epic figure. His adventurous nature as he participates in the life and times of an important stage in the development of the Western frontier, the settling of the Mississippi River Valley, qualifies Huck as a symbol of that phase of American development. He is a kind of Odysseus of the Mississippi. Huck's involvement in the events of his time, his acceptance of his own moral responsibility for his fellow human beings combine to give the hero of Twain's novel an epic stature. From the very first page of _Huckleberry Finn_, its hero wants only to be "free and satisfied." Despite his frankly avowed hedonism, Huck is seldom able to rid himself for any appreci-
able length of time his feelings of responsibility for improving the lot of the human race.

Hemingway, Ernest. The Old Man and the Sea (1952). For eighty-four days the old fisherman, Santiago, had not caught a single fish. It looked as if his luck had permanently deserted him. Hardship, hunger, and poverty had become his lot. Even his boat and its equipment had begun to look like ill fortune. "The sail was patched with flour sacks and furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat," Hemingway observes at the beginning of his short novel.

For a while a young boy, Manolin, shared Santiago's bad fortune, but after the fortieth day with no luck the boy's father told him to go out in another boat so that he could earn money. After this Santiago rowed out from the safe shore, alone in his boat, so that he could lower his lines into the deep blue of the Gulf stream where the big marlin stayed. Each evening he came home empty-handed.

Had it not been for the boy Manolin, who loved the old fisherman dearly, Santiago would not have had enough to eat on many days. Manolin could manage for food. He had ways; he would either beg or steal food and fresh baits for the old man.

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. His hands were calloused, with deep-creased
scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh.

Santiago loved baseball and he enjoyed spending the evenings talking with Manolin about the New York Yankees and Joe DiMaggio. At night the old man loved to dream about lions. He had seen lions romping on the beaches of Africa, and now he liked to dream of them in his old age.

Early in the morning of Santiago's eighty-fifth day without a single catch he rose before dawn, went to Manolin's home and awakened the boy. The lad helped the old man with his gear and together they shoved the skiff into the water. The boy wished his aged friend good luck, and Santiago replied that he felt confident that he would catch a big fish that day. Hemingway says that:

The old man knew he was going out far and he left the smell of the land behind and rowed out into the clean early morning smell of the ocean.

Santiago loves the ocean, for he says, "She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel..."

Before it was really light he had his baits out and was drifting with the current. Santiago was a superb fisherman even though he had been having a run of bad luck. One bait was forty fathoms. The second was at seventy-five and the third and fourth were down in the blue water at one hundred and one hundred and twenty-five fathoms. The old man was
very precise and exacting about his lines. He liked to manage his boat so that as the baits drifted with the current of the ocean, the lines extending into the blue water would remain straight up and down. In fact, he kept his lines straighter than anyone did. His baits were so arranged that there would be one at each level at which the big marlin swam. Of course, he well knew that the biggest fish swam deepest.

About noon the old man suddenly felt the unmistakable tightening of the line that could only mean that deep down in the ocean a marlin was nibbling at the sardines which covered the point of one of the hooks. He held the line delicately and softly, ready to let line slip between his fingers so that if the marlin took the bait he would feel no tension. Hemingway says:

He was happy feeling the gentle pulling and then he felt something hard and unbelievably heavy. It was the weight of the fish and he let the line slip down, down, down, unrolling off the first of the two reserve coils.

Eventually, Santiago thought that the fish had swallowed the hook, and he gave several hard pulls, reeling in line as fast as he could in order "to set" the hook. Then it was that he felt the great weight of the big fish. Never had he felt such a fish as this. He knew he could never pull this fish in to the boat. Now he saw that the boat was being
towed by the great marlin more than six hundred feet down in the blue water. The old man held the line taut across his shoulder and made secure in his hand.

Santiago pitied the big fish, for its choice had been to stay in the deep water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. He saw that he and the fish were fastened to each other in an elemental struggle of strength, endurance, will, and cunning. The old fisherman, knowing the nature of the struggle to come, said:

"Fish, I love you....I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends."

Santiago saw that this is what life consists of, a basic conflict between man and the forces of nature, a battle in which the combatants either kill or are killed. There was no hate in the old man's heart for the big fish. He wished that he could feed the fish. "He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it."

The great fish was noble and strong and brave. He towed the boat from noon of the day he was hooked until the next day at noon, through the afternoon of the second day and on into the night of the second day. Sometime after midnight the fish surfaced and began jumping. The old man knew that this was an all but fatal mistake on the part of the marlin. The marlin, in jumping free from the water, would fill the
little air sacks along his back. Unable to dive deep down, he would either die or else capsize the boat when all of the line had been run out. The sun was shining for the third time since Santiago had put to sea when the fish began to circle.

Fatigue and the pain of his blistered, burned hands were taking their toll of the old man's strength.

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

The old man's will finally triumphed over the big fish's strength. He succeeded in pulling the skiff alongside the exhausted fish. Dropping the line for a moment, Santiago took the harpoon from the bottom of the boat, raised it and with all his remaining strength plunged the harpoon into the fish, just behind the great chest fin.

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and beauty.

Soon the fish was dead. Now Santiago must keep his head and conserve his strength in order to get the fish back to Havana. Santiago estimated that the fish would weight more than fifteen hundred pounds. The fish was so big that in
lashing it alongside his boat, Santiago felt that it was the equal of fastening another skiff to his own boat.

The old man rode a fair breeze back toward Havana for the first hour after he had killed the marlin. Then the first shark struck the fish. The first shark that approached the marlin just above the tail, bringing its head and back out of the water. The old man rammed his harpoon down into the shark's head. He saw the shark had taken about forty pounds from the marlin that was his prize. When the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were struck by the shark.

More sharks came to tear at the fish. The old man lost his harpoon in one shark and then his knife, which he lashed to an oar, broke off in another. Nothing remained to serve as a weapon against the sharks which came again and again to tear at his fish except the oars, the gaff, and the tiller. But he decided that he would fight the sharks until he died.

When he sailed into the little harbor, the lights of the Terrace were out and he knew everyone was in bed. The old man fastened his skiff, furled the sail, and began carrying the mast up the hill. He looked back and saw the backbone of the great fish, its torn head, and "all the nakedness between." Near the top of the hill the old fisherman fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder. Finally, he reached his shack.
The next morning Manolin learned that his friend Santiago had caught a marlin eighteen feet long, and that the sharks had stripped away all of the meat. The boy went to get coffee for the old man and then sat patiently waiting for him to awaken. Finally, the old man did awaken to tell the boy, "They beat me, Manolin....They truly beat me."

Manolin told his friend that he would join him and that he would bring him better luck.

That afternoon there was a party of tourists at the Terrace and, looking down into the water, they saw the great white spine of the big fish. Thinking that it was the skeleton of a shark, one of the women said that she did not know sharks had such handsome, beautifully formed tails.

In shaping and forming his story Hemingway has kept it simple and direct. He has used his materials skillfully, and with great restraint. The form is classical in its simplicity. The story of Santiago is one of human courage, humility, and pride.

Beyond the level of a great sea story, an account of man's struggle for existence against brute nature, does The Old Man and the Sea have symbolic and philosophical meanings? In the final analysis no one can say. Hemingway himself has sidestepped answering those who have asked him what the story means. In any event, one cannot overlook the suggestion that for those who go out farther and fish deeper
there is much greater risk involved than for those who stay within sight of the safe shoreline. Also, there is the hint that there are greater rewards for those who dare to leave the sight of land. Philip Young believes that Hemingway's novel has levels of meaning that go beyond a realistic fish story. Young says:

If we ask ourselves what The Old Man and the Sea is "about" on a public and figurative level, we can only answer "life," which is the finest and most ambitious thing for a parable to be about. Hemingway has written about life: a struggle against the impossible odds of unconquerable natural forces in which—given such a fact as that of death—a man can only lose, but which he can dominate in such a way that his loss has dignity, itself the victory.10

In the novel, Santiago exceeds his strength and goes too far. In this sense the novel is Grecian in tone since it is built upon the fatal flaw of pride. The old man accepts the vulturism of the sharks with maturity and resignation. When his ordeal has ended, he sees nothing unusual or unique about his struggle with the fish. Ironically, if the old man's experience means anything to society, it is lost on the bored young tourists who fail to read the meaning of the struggle and the experience. Each man, presumably, must go out beyond and catch his own fish if he is to see the "light."

10Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway, pp. 99-100.
In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway incorporates numerous suggestions of Christian imagery. Santiago's hands are so burned and torn from the line that they are somewhat remindful of the torn and bleeding hands of Jesus when he was nailed to the cross. When the old man succeeds in climbing the hill, carrying his mast on his back, and then falls, exhausted, the image of Christ carrying his cross is unmistakable. Hemingway heightens this suggestion as he says of Santiago, that he fell on his cot, "face down...with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up."

**Summary.** In presenting the explications which comprise Chapter VII, the writer has chosen two examples each of the short story, the drama, and the novel. Excepting the two novels, all of these selections are found in high-school literature anthologies. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* long has been a favorite with the high-school reader, and *The Old Man and the Sea* seems destined to become one of the great literary classics of the age.

The general plan that guided the selection of the works for explication was that of choosing a "classic" literary work and a contemporary work in each of the three *genres*, the short story, the drama, and the novel.

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Summary. Several assumptions were made at the outset of this investigation. In Chapter I, "Purpose and Nature of the Investigation," it was stated that there is general agreement that Americans do not read as much, as well, nor as discriminately as increased responsibility devolving upon all citizens in a democracy demands. The public schools, it was said, must accept some responsibility for the failure of citizens to develop a high level of reading skills. With the continuing extension of free, compulsory, public education, it must be assumed that the schools have accepted and are willing to continue to accept responsibility for teaching the skills of reading.

In undertaking this study, the writer assumed that secondary schools are obligated to continue the process of teaching skills of reading that was started in the elementary schools. Traditional methods of teaching literature in high schools, it must be assumed, have not been wholly satisfactory in any real sense since these methods have stressed facts about literature and have given only infrequent and passing attention to the actual reading and comprehending of the written word. This investigation was
undertaken on the assumption that one method of improving reading speed and comprehension in secondary schools was that of giving increased emphasis to the method of teaching literature that is known as explication de texte.

Explication de texte is a French phrase which means, literally, an "unfolding of the text." The method of explicating, or unfolding the meaning of a poem is not new. The Greek critic Longinus recommended and gave some attention to a close reading of the text as a method of literary criticism. In 1895, Revue Universitaire contained an article on explication de textes. Samuel Taylor Coleridge used the method of explication in some of his Shakespearean criticism. Among modern critics, I. A. Richards is one of the leaders in the use of the method.

Arms and Kuntz in Poetry Explication define explication de texte as "the examination of a work of literature for a knowledge of each part, for the relations of these parts to each other, and for their relations to the whole." This interpretation of explication de texte de-emphasizes the study of the life of the author, textual matters, and critical opinion.

While the writer is aware of the close similarity between explication de texte as a means of studying literature and the method of the New Criticism, a critical school, he does not endorse all of the limiting techniques employed by the
New Critics. In the sense that the explications which were prepared for this study adhered to a close reading and analysis of the text, it may be said that they reflect the method of the New Criticism. Beyond this obvious similarity, however, there is little in common between the method of this study and the method of the New Criticism. The New Criticism has developed a special jargon and dialectic of its own, thus delimiting its scope. For many modern critics, the method has assumed such a primacy as to come between the reader and the literary work under examination.

As has been said, the major portion of this study is comprised of a considerable number of examples of explications of pieces of literature, all of which are being read at present in American high schools. In order to make the selection of literary works for explication as realistic as possible, the writer made an analysis of six sets of anthologies of high-school literature.\textsuperscript{1} From this analysis it was possible to determine works that appeared frequently and others that appeared only rarely in literature textbooks being read in the secondary schools. Explications of both the commonly read and works infrequently read were prepared.

\textsuperscript{1}For a list of the anthologies analyzed for this study, see Appendix, p. 381.
Is the method of explication of value in an educational program designed to fulfill the needs of modern youth? Since the method of explication approaches the literary selection as a written communication, earlier theories of teaching reading—routine vocabulary drill, exercises in eye span, and oral interpretation—are of only limited value in this context. Explication assumes that each literary composition is a unique work which can be understood only after a close scrutiny of each word, phrase, clause, and sentence, and after the reader has examined and understood the work in its entirety. Reading is a personal and intimate recreation by the reader of the author's experiences and ideas.

In Chapter II, "Goals of Secondary Education," it was found that the development of an acceptable set of goals for the American high school is complicated by disagreement as to the role of the school, variant philosophies of education and their implications for the high school, and some controversy growing out of the nature of the good and full life.

The educational philosophies of idealism, Thomism, realism, instrumentalism, and reconstructionism were examined for their implications in formulating educational objectives. Several sets of goals for secondary education that have been proposed in the past were listed and examined for their possible usefulness in today's schools. Included
in these statements of goals were the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*,\(^1\) the "Imperative Educational Needs of Youth,"\(^2\) and *The Philosophy and Purposes of the University School*.\(^3\) Nine goals for American secondary education were suggested by the writer. These aims, it is believed, reflect in general the historic as well as the contemporary purposes of the American high school. The writer attempted to use historic objectives which appear desirable and applicable in today's schools while at the same time giving consideration to the newer aims arising from the changed conditions of modern life. In general, the goals assume a moral universe and a moral order; they obligate the schools to transmit the cultural heritage; they foster democratic values, attitudes, and conduct; and they make provision for beginning vocational instruction.

Chapter III, "Goals for High-School English," sought to provide an historical perspective for the consideration of the aims of the English program. Numerous authoritative statements of the objectives for teaching English in secondary education.


\(^3\)The Faculty of The Ohio State University School, *The Philosophy and Purposes of the University School*, pp. 10-11.
schools were examined by the writer. Such historic documents as the Hosic report (1917), *The Teaching of English in England* (1922), *How the French Boy Learns to Write* (1915), *The English Language Arts* (1952), *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* (1956) were inspected.

Six goals for English language arts programs in the American high school were proposed. Generally, the aims laid emphasis upon instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Stress was placed upon actual writing and speaking experiences in the classroom, combined with the study of language theory. Compositional activities and the reading of literature were given equal stress. The recently published Conant report, *The American High School Today*, reflects the spirit of these goals in its sixth recommendation, which is as follows:

*The time devoted to English composition during the four years should occupy about half the total time devoted to the study of English. Each student should be required to write an average of one theme a week.*

Chapter IV, "Nature and Status of Reading in High Schools," had as its primary objective that of defining the nature of reading and of determining the state of

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reading in the secondary schools today. Some of the basic research that has been undertaken in the field of reading was reviewed. It was discovered that annually more than 2500 separate reported studies dealing with reading and related problems are carried on. While the status of reading is not hopeless by any definition of the term, research indicates numerous areas where improvement can be made.

Gordon Dupee, president of the Great Books Foundation, writing in the *Saturday Review*, reported that the state of adult reading in America is "apathetic." He said that "Ours is a society which does not honour reading." If Johnny cannot read, Dupee argued, it is simply because his parents cannot and do not read. In America today, one fourth of all college graduates do not read one book per year, Dupee reported. Worse than that, three-fifths of high-school graduates do not read a book per year.

Finally, and conclusively, it was found that in America in 1958, Mickey Spillane, a writer of no literary standing, was the most widely read author. Little, Brown Company released a bulletin which was reported in the *English Journal*, stating that Spillane's thirty books have sold well over 40,000,000 copies, to make him the most widely read author today.

Reading was found to be an experience that is purposeful, having personal, social, and cultural values for the
reader and for society. Reading is an activity in which the reader reacts at varying levels to the thoughts imparted by the printed page. There must be an intellectual as well as an aesthetic response to that which is being read.

Chapter V, "Tools for Explication," sought to list and describe a number of scholarly tools that might prove helpful in teaching literature by use of the method of explication de texte. For varying reasons, many English teachers today are unfamiliar with the assistance that can be gained from wise and constant use of some of the tools explained in Chapter V.

The range of literature taught in the typical high-school English class is such that no one teacher can hope to be familiar with all of the pertinent scholarly studies that have been published. The aids that were considered in this chapter can do much to help a teacher broaden his understanding not only of particular works but of the cultural and intellectual ethos of the age in which the work appeared.

Too much reliance upon literary scholarship to the neglect of the actual reading of literature and discussing the works of literature is an ever-present danger. In presenting a list of tools for explication, the writer warned against over-use of these aids.

Chapter VI, "Explications of Selected Poems," is a series of critical exegeses of poems being read today in
American high schools. In all, twenty-six English and American poems were explicated. The poems were arranged alphabetically by author in order to make for quick reference by anyone desiring help on a particular poem.

The chapter began with an explication of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (1867) and concluded with William Butler Yeats's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1890). Fourteen English and twelve American poems were explicated. The English poems ranged in date of publication from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. American poems covered a period from 1818 (Bryant: "To a Waterfowl") to 1940 (Auden: "The Unknown Citizen").

Titles and dates of publication of the English poems are as follows: Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach" (1867); William Blake, "The Tiger" (1794); Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842), and "Prospice" (1864); Geoffrey Chaucer, Prologue to The Canterbury Tales (1387); John Donne, "The Canonization" (1633); Thomas Gray, "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751); Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush" (1900); A. E. Housman, "To An Athlete Dying Young" (1896); John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819); William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 30" (ca. 1592-96); Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias" (1818); Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar" (1889); and William Butler Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1890).
The following American poems were analyzed in Chapter VI: W. H. Auden, "The Unknown Citizen" (1940); William Cullen Bryant, "To A Waterfowl" (1818) and "Thanatopsis" (1821); Emily Dickinson, "A Route of Evanescence" and "The Railway Train" (ca. 1862); Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Rhodora" (1834) and "Days" (1851); Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923) and "The Road Not Taken" (1916); Edgar Allan Poe, "To Helen" (1831); and Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Richard Cory" (1897) and "Cliff Klingenhagen" (1897).

Chapter VI is by far the longest chapter in the study. To this investigator it seems quite proper that this be so. Teaching poetry presents more problems, both for student and teacher, than does any other literary type, in the opinion of this writer. It is believed that the explications contained in Chapter VI, as well as those in Chapter VII, may help in achieving improved reading of literature in high schools.

Chapter VII, "Explications of Selected Prose," is comprised of examples of three types of literature, namely, the short story, drama, and novel. It was decided to choose, first of all, literary works that are being read widely in high-school English classes. Second, the works are representative of both "classics" and the contemporary. Third, where possible, the works have significance to the high-school reader. The writer believes that in Nathaniel Hawthorne's
"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" (1836) and William Faulkner's "Two Soldiers" (1942) all of the requirements for selection of short stories were adequately met.

Because it was found in an analysis of six sets of high-school literature anthologies that William Shakespeare's Macbeth (1606) was included in all, the writer decided to prepare an explication of this, the shortest and possibly the most widely read play found in today's secondary schools.

A second play chosen for analysis in this chapter was the contemporary drama, Thornton Wilder's Our Town (1938). Our Town is a modern allegory that concerns life in a small town, Grover's Corners, New Hampshire.

The two novels selected for inclusion in this chapter were Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885) and Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea (1952). Both of these novels are read widely by high-school students. Excerpts from each are frequently included in literature anthologies.

Conclusions. 1. Explication de texte as a means of improving the reading of literature in high school reflects recent trends in language arts programs. One such trend identified in this study is that of giving increased attention to the close reading of literature, particularly the imaginative, perceptive, multi-level reading of the printed word as it is practiced in explication de texte. In the publication of the National Council of Teachers of English,
The English Language Arts, it was found that increased attention to close reading of literature is recommended by the Council.

2. If the ability to read with a modicum of perception is essential to preserving the democratic processes, then disturbing evidence is available, as was revealed in the study, that Americans do not read as well, as much, nor as discriminately as they should. Adult reading habits cannot be regarded as ideal. Therefore, evidence points to the conclusion that the schools are obligated to do an even better job of teaching sensitive, perceptive reading than they have been doing.

3. In the past English teachers seem to have placed an undue amount of stress upon the mechanics of reading, upon biography, upon schools of influence, and upon memorization of assigned passages. The method of explication de texte is an attempt to provide more effective techniques for the study of literature. With its emphasis upon close reading and analysis of works of literature, explication of the text directs attention of both student and teacher away from literary historiography toward the content of literature.

4. Since it is generally accepted that one of the roles to be performed by the secondary school is that of transmitting the cultural heritage, this investigator believes the explications presented in this study point to the
conclusion that the close reading of literature can make a valuable contribution toward acquainting each generation with some of the lessons of the past.

5. Helping today's youth to gain increased sensitivity to moral, ethical, and aesthetic values is an accepted aim of secondary schools. Reading literary works for the cultural insight they provide is one means by which today's adolescent may be given new and positive understandings of the zeitgeist of his time. A student who has engaged in a detailed study of Macbeth, for instance, is more qualified to see the dangers of ambition that is shorn of ethical restraint than is the adolescent who has not had the experience of knowing and suffering with Macbeth. Such a youth is better qualified to recognize the would-be-demagogue than he would otherwise be, had he not read Macbeth.

6. Although the writer found the preparation of the explications contained in this study an invigorating and challenging intellectual and aesthetic experience, he feels compelled to observe that possibly for some teachers the method of explication de texte would be too exacting and taxing. For teachers who have spent years studying the lives of the poets rather than their poetry, the method of explication would be a new departure. However, for those teachers who may be dissatisfied with the study of facts about literature, the explications presented in this investigation may serve as a partial guide toward the adoption of
the method of close reading and analysis of literature. This, of course, was one of the primary objectives of the study.

7. In preparing the various exegeses contained in this study the writer has consistently striven to avoid committing himself to any one school of thought, and to shun any single philosophic position. Instead, each work of literature has been treated as having its own integrity, its own completeness. The literary composition has been regarded as communication, as in some way reflecting the imagined or real experience of the author. This experience suggests that the method of explication de texte, with its constant concern for close reading, is admirably suited to achieving some degree of detachment in approaching a work of literature. Explication de texte, it is concluded, is likely to be useful to the reader who would put aside pre-conceived notions and seek for new vistas of interpretation.
APPENDIX

Following is a list of high-school literature anthologies that was used as a basis for the selection of literary works used for the explications in this study.


. Exploring Life Through Literature.

. The United States in Literature.


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I, Espy Wallace Miller, was born at Mill Creek, West Virginia, April 13, 1914. I received my elementary and secondary-school education in Mill Creek, and my undergraduate training at Concord College, Athens, West Virginia, which granted me the bachelor of arts degree in 1937. I was awarded the master of arts degree in 1940 by Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In 1946 I was appointed an instructor in English at Glenville State College, Glenville, West Virginia. I became chairman of the Language Division in 1953, a position I continue to occupy. From 1949 until 1951, I was in residence at The Ohio State University, completing the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy.