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Introduction

First produced at the Yale Repertory Theater in 1982, Athol Fugard's "Master Harold". . . and the Boys is based on the playwright's early life in South Africa. But the play itself is not a simple retelling of an incident from his past. Rather, Fugard has presented a personal experience that extends to universal humanity. If the play were simply a polemic against the policy of apartheid, It would already be outdated now that sweeping change has transformed South Africa. Instead, Fugard wrote a play about human relationships that are put to the test by societal and personal forces.

Because Fugard (critically) focused most of his work on the injustices of the apartheid system of South Africa's government, government officials called many of Fugard's works subversive and several times attempted to prevent publication and/or production of his plays. Much of his early work was presented to small private audiences to avoid government censorship. "Master Harold" . . . and the Boys, however, played 344 performances on Broadway and was produced in other major cities including London. The play was officially banned by the South African government. Despite the efforts of his native country, the wider world community did not Ignore Fugard's work and "Master Harold" . . . and the Boys earned the Drama Desk Award and Critics Circle Award for best play in 1983, and London's Evening Standard Award in 1984. The play has subsequently earned a place in contemporary world drama, enjoying frequent revivals around the world it is considered to be one of Fugard's masterpieces and a vital work valued for both its universal themes of humanity and its skilled theater craft.
Author Biography

Harold Athol Fugard was born June 11, 1932, in Middleburg, Cape Province, South Africa (and later raised in Port Elizabeth, South Africa), to a father who was English and a mother who was Afrikaner (a white South African descended from Dutch settlers). Fugard described his father as a man "full of pointless, unthought-out prejudices." His mother, on the other hand, felt "outrage and anger over the injustice of [South African] society"—particularly the system of apartheid that established separate, unequal rights for whites and blacks.

Fugard attended Port Elizabeth Technical College and the University of Cape Town, where he studied philosophy. He dropped out in 1953, just prior to graduation, however, and toured the world as a crew member of a tramp steamer bound from the Sudan to the Far East between 1953 and 1955. During this time he attempted to write a novel but, dissatisfied with what he produced, he destroyed the manuscript. A few years later, just about the time of his marriage to South African actress Sheila Meiring in 1956, Fugard developed an interest in writing for the stage.

His first full length plays, *No-Good Friday* (1956) and *Nongogo* (1957) grew out of his experiences in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the late 1950s. Fugard worked there briefly as a clerk in the Native Commissioner's Court, which tried cases against nonwhites (the South African term for black citizens) who had been arrested for falling to carry identification. "I knew the system was evil," Fugard recalled, "but until then I had no idea of just how systematically evil it was. That was my revelation."

These initial plays were performed by Fugard and black amateur actors for small private audiences.

After a brief move to England in 1959, Fugard returned to South Africa and completed a novel, *Tsotsi*. Although he attempted to destroy this manuscript as he had an earlier one, a copy survived and was published twenty years later. Fugard's first major...
theatrical success was *The Blood Knot* (1961), a story about the sense of conflict and harmony between two nonwhite half-brothers. First presented to a private audience in 1961, the play featured Fugard as the light-skinned brother, Moms, and actor Zakes Mokae—who became a close friend and long-time Fugard collaborator—as the dark-skinned brother, Zach. In *The Blood Knot*, Fugard dramatizes the racial hatred that infects so many South African relationships. This ambivalence per−verts the "blood knot," or common bond of humanity.

In 1983, Fugardearned the Drama Desk Award and the Critic's Circle Award for best play and, in 1984, the *Evening Standard* of London award for "*Master Harold*" . . . *and the Boys*. Widely consid− ered Fugard's best and most autobiographical play, "*Master Harold*" centers on the relationship of two black waiters, Sam and Willy, to Hally ("Master Harold"), a white teenager embittered by the neg−lect of his alcoholic, racist father.

In addition to his plays and notebooks, Fugard has also written screenplays for *Boseman and Lena* (based on his play), 1972; *The Guest*, 1976; *Meet−Ings with Remarkable Men*, 1979; *Marigolds in August*, 1980; *Ghandi*, 1982; and *The Killing Fields*, 1984.
Plot Summary

"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys is a one-act that takes place inside the St. George's Park Tea Room on a wet and windy Port Elizabeth (South Africa) afternoon in 1950. No customers populate the res–taurant and most of tables and chairs have been stacked to one side. Two black waiters, Willie and Sam, are on stage as the play begins. Willie is mopping the floor, and Sam is reading comic books at a table which has been set for a meal. Willie wants to improve his dancing skills but appears to have been deserted by his partner after he beat her. Sam offers Willie advice about improving both his danc–ing technique and his domestic relations.

The son of the tearoom's owner, Hally, enters direct from school. He eats a bowl of soup and talks to the two men with whom he appears to have a close relationship. Hally, while displaying obvious affection for the men–especially Sam–takes a pedantic tone, assuming the role of teacher. Yet the nature of their interaction clearly shows Sam as the teacher and Hally as the eager pupil. Their discus–sion ranges from what Hally has been learning at school about great men of history to reminiscences of the old Jubilee Boarding House, where the young Hally used to hide in Sam and Willie's room. They also talk about the kite that Sam made for Hally and taught him how to fly as well as the art of ball–room dancing.

The recollection of the kite has special signifi–cance for Sam and Hally. The kite is a symbol of their deep friendship. An incident from a few years prior is recalled in which Sam had to carry Hally's father, drunken to the point of incoherence, home. The boy was deeply ashamed of his father and greatly depressed by the incident. Sam built him the kite as a symbol of their friendship and to give Hally something to which he could, figuratively and literally, look up, holding his head high ("I wanted you to look up, be proud of something, of yourself. . .").

From the exchanges between Hally and the two men and two one-sided telephone conversations, it becomes apparent that Hally's crippled and drunken father is to return
home from the hospital that day. Hally loves his father but is also ashamed of him and wants him to remain at the hospital. At first the boy pretends that it isn't true, that his father will remain at the hospital indefinitely, preserving the idyllic quality of Hally's recent life. Yet as the realization sinks in, Hally becomes depressed and tells Sam that it might be time to build another kite.

As his father's return becomes imminent, Hally's mood changes drastically. He becomes brutally rude to the two men, insults them with racial slurs, and, in an act of cruel insolence, spits in Sam's face. Sam starts forward as if he means to strike the boy, but Willie restrains him. Sam regains his composure and, removing his white servant's jacket, extends his hand to Hally in a gesture of equality, friendship, and forgiveness. The boy, however, is too ashamed of his cruelty to even look the older man in the face. Hally departs, and Sam and Willie dance together as Sarah Vaughn sings the blues.
Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

"Master Harold... and the Boys" is a one-act play which takes place in the St. George's Tea Room in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The three characters, Master Harold (also known as Hally), Sam and Willie explore the concepts of racism and apartheid on a rainy afternoon in 1950.

The restaurant is empty on such a dreary afternoon and Willie, a waiter, is tidying up while a second waiter, Sam, sits and reads comic books at a table set for a meal. Sam and Willie are black men in their mid-forties and have been employed at the St. George's Tea Room for many years.

Willie is anxious because he and his girlfriend are entered in a dance competition to be held in a few weeks and Willie is still uncomfortable with some of the dance steps. Willie is also unsure of his girlfriend's participation because Willie reveals that he has recently beaten her again and she has left. Sam tries to tell Willie what he is doing wrong with both his dance steps and his personal life.

Master Harold, also known as Hally, is the seventeen-year-old white son of the woman who owns the tearoom and has come in from a day at school ready for his lunch. Sam informs Hally that his mother has gone to the hospital where Hally's father is a patient. Sam thinks that Hally's father is to be released today, an idea to which Hally reacts quite negatively.

Hally shares with Sam and Willie that he has been punished with six spankings at school for drawing an irreverent picture of a teacher. Sam explains the humiliating and painful process of caning used as punishment in the judicial system, at which Hally is shocked. Hally bristles at the injustice of the world in general and claims that someday someone will change all the systems that keep inequities and punishment in place.
Hally and Sam discuss the possibility of social reform and the conversation expands to include their personal choices for those people who have made the most significant contributions to mankind. Sam and Hally agree on one final choice and Hally congratulates himself on successfully educating Sam over the years.

Sam and Hally have had a close relationship for many years beginning during Sam's employment at the Jubilee Boarding House, which Hally's mother owned. Hally would seek out Sam and Willie when the activity and conflict in the boarding house was too much for the young Hally. As Hally describes his memories of Sam and Willie's room, the two men recreate the room with the available tables and chairs as stand-ins for the furniture. The three characters fondly reminisce about the days and evenings of reading, learning and games played in the small room.

Then Hally urges Sam to remember the best day they ever spent together and Sam cannot recall at first. Hally continues to remind Sam of the homemade kite he had made for Hally and how Sam taught the boy to fly it in spite of his fears that it would crash and he would be responsible for its failure. Sam's encouragement on the day of the kite flying sparked something in Hally which forged a bond with the two from that point on.

Hally comments on the unusual sight that he and Sam must have been that day; a black man and a small white boy flying a kite. Hally's father is a cripple and Hally muses that being seen with his father in that situation would have been just as strange. As Hally voices his longings for a normal life, he is interrupted by a phone call from his mother telling Hally that his father will be coming home from the hospital today.

Hally launches into a frantic attempt to prevent his father's return and Hally reminds his mother of how difficult life is with his father at home. Hally pleads with his mother to inquire with the doctors to keep him as a patient for a longer period of time.

Hally's irritation extends to Sam and Willie, whom Hally orders to complete their tasks. Hally admits that he does not want his father at home and that life is a
complicated mess. To Hally, it seems that just when things are going along just fine, something happens to complicate matters for the worse. Hally calls this the principle of perpetual disappointment.

Sam tries to divert Hally into doing his homework and the boy tries to settle down but is too agitated to concentrate. Sam tries to help Willie with his ballroom dancing steps and the noise is too much for Hally, who cracks Willie on the rear end with a ruler. The two men return to their chores as Hally reprimands them for inappropriate behavior in a place of business.

Sam contends that dancing is a harmless pleasure which does no harm to anyone and tries to get Hally to dance with him. Hally resists, as dancing is a simple-minded enterprise with no real goal. Making people happy is a good thing, according to Sam and that is exactly what dancing does. To Sam, dancing is also a thing of beauty and he encourages Hally to attend the dance competition to understand what he means.

Sam wants Hally to attend the upcoming dance competition to experience the music and the energy so that Hally can know the beauty and the power of the championship. Hally is still skeptical, so Sam and Willie attempt to set the scene in the tea room by explaining the elegance of the ladies and the formality of the occasion. Hally wonders what the impact is when someone bumps into someone else, to which Sam replies that there are no collisions on this dance floor. According to Sam, dancing in the competition is like being in a world where accidents do not happen.

At last, Hally is caught up in Sam's energy and admits that the ballroom scenario sounds beautiful. Sam continues by saying that the dance is beautiful because it is what people would like the world to be and for one evening no one bumps into each other like they do in everyday life. According to Sam, people bump into people, countries bump into other countries, rich men bump into poor men and the list goes on.
This practice of bumping into each other has been going on for too long and Sam wonders when people will be able to dance like champions. Obviously, people share Sam's vision because the dance competitions are always sold out and they are standing room only. The dance competition allows people to view a microcosm of the way they want the world to be.

Hally contends that that is probably not enough to change the world but according to Sam, the competition is a beginning. Sam compares Gandhi and the Pope with people who are able to get the dance steps right, in other words bringing the people of the world together without bumping into anybody.

Hally is energized now and he considers writing a school paper on the topic of the dance competition as a metaphor for global politics. The telephone interrupts Hally, who speaks to his mother and it becomes clear that Hally's father is being released from the hospital today. Hally has a verbal outburst about the negative implications of his father's return to home which includes many medical and personal hygiene issues to which Hally must attend for his father.

Managing to rally momentarily, Hally speaks to his father in a conciliatory tone in an attempt to convince his father of a welcome return. Hally's dark mood cannot be lifted by Sam and Willie and all the visionary talk from a short while ago is now lost. Hally orders the two men to finish their work as he prepares to pack up his belongings and go home.

Unable to resist one last comment, Hally tells Sam that the dream of a better world is flawed because most people are bad dancers and Sam has also neglected to consider cripples in his metaphor. According to Hally, the reality of life is that nobody knows the dance steps, the music is nonexistent and the cripples bump into everyone else.

Sam chastises Hally for speaking derogatorily about his own father and demands that Hally retract his words and apologize but Hally refuses. In response, Sam refuses to listen to any more of Hally's negativity and Hally yells at Sam to mind his own
business and to stay focused on the work he was hired to do.

In retaliation for Sam's comments, Hally tells Sam to call him Master Harold instead of Hally just like Willie does. Sam declares that if Hally forces the issue, he will never call Hally by his informal name again. Hally persists in taunting Sam in an attempt to put him in his place as a black man and an employee of the tearoom.

Sam tries to explain to Hally the implications of what the boy's behavior has had on their relationship. Sam has always tried to help Hally because the boy's father is a cripple and always dependent. It was always important to Sam to show Hally how to grow up to be a real man and now Hally has insulted Sam's spirit which is a tremendous wound.

Sam reminds Hally of the night when Hally's mother was not at home when someone from the bar called because Hally's father was drunk and needed help to get home. Hally had come to Sam in the night and Sam carried the crippled man on his back while Hally walked beside him on the way home from the bar that night. Sam can still feel Hally's pain from that night all those years ago and eventually so does Hally and the boy admits that he really does love his father.

Sam is able to identify the complex emotional issues surrounding Hally's feelings for his father and tells the boy that he must not be ashamed of his father and Hally must not feel guilty or responsible for the way things are in his home life. Sam reminds Hally of the kite he had built and tells the boy that the reason for it was so that Hally could look up and be proud of something and proud of himself.

Hally is indignant at Sam's speech but Sam tries to reach the boy one more time and offers to build another kite because it seems as if they both need it. Hally leaves and Willie tries to convince Sam that tomorrow will be a better day and the two men play a song on the jukebox and sway to the music of Sarah Vaughn.

Analysis
It is important to note the system of apartheid which governed South Africa in the 1950's when the play's action occurs because it is at the core of the author's message. The separation of black people existed in every layer of South African society where black men were forced into subservience to white people, even including children.

Hally takes an obviously superior tone with Sam and is smug about teaching Sam over all the years the man has been employed at the tearoom. At one point in the play, Hally responds to Sam by spitting in his face, to which Sam could not respond or react due to the nature of their relationship.

Sam also tries to point out to Hally the reason for his not lingering the day of the kite flying. Sam led Hally to believe that he needed to return to work but the bench on which Hally was resting was designated for whites only and Sam did not want to explain the true reason to the boy.

Hally is understandably conflicted emotionally because society condones humiliating behavior towards black men like Sam, yet Sam has been the only positive male role model in Hally's life. It is Sam who advises Hally not to be ashamed of his crippled father and has been a constant in Hally's life for many years.

One of Sam's lessons for Hally is the development of some coping mechanisms in regard to the conflicted emotions toward his father. All visionary and positive energy drains out of Hally when he talks with his mother and learns of his father's imminent return from the hospital. Sam had the foresight many years ago to determine that if he were going to be in Hally's life, he would help him focus on staying positive and looking up, as evidenced by the kite-flying lesson.

The author utilizes the technique of memory and flashback to add depth to the story without the need for additional scenes. The kite-flying situation, the stories about Hally's time spent with Willie and Sam in the boarding house and the story about Sam helping Hally retrieve his drunken crippled father one night all add substance to the history of these three characters and essentially defines the long-term relationship they
all share.

It is ironic that a black man in apartheid South Africa has the inner core and strength to teach living skills to a privileged white boy with more social and physical superiority. At the end of the play, when Hally realizes the implications of how he has damaged his relationship with Sam, it is not only his pride, but society's voice in his ear that will not allow the boy to apologize to Sam, his mentor and friend.

Sam's discussion of the dance competition as a metaphor of the world political and economic situation belies an intuitive intelligence beyond his education and Sam has tried to impart some of this naturalistic learning to Hally, who is clearly the better educated of the two. Unfortunately, Hally bows to social power and privilege and makes the pivotal decision to alter his relationship with Sam where Hally will now see his old friend as a black man and an inferior.

Understandable to a degree, Hally, who is completely vulnerable and powerless in his own family dynamic, needs to assert himself to re-gain some sense of power. He does it in the only way he knows, one which is not only acceptable, but condoned, in this time in South Africa. The question remains as to what Hally has given up in exchange for this shift in his personal dynamic and unfortunate scenario of coming of age in the age of apartheid.
Characters

Hally

Seventeen-year old Hally, the white son of the owners of the St. George's Park Tea Room, is the "Master Harold" Of the title. Hally appears devoted to Sam, one of two black waiters employed by his family's business. The young man takes great pride in "educating" Sam through brief recapitulations of lessons learned from books and in the classroom. But, in reality, it has been Sam who has been "educating" the young man, teaching him the ways of the world. Hally, however, has been affected by both the South African apartheid society of the late 1950s, which has taught him to view nonwhites as second-class citizens, and his drunken father's inability to serve as a parent When Hally learns that his father is coming home from the alcoholic ward of the local hospital, he is conflicted with feelings of both love and shame The self-assured young man of the beginning of the play degenerates into an embittered child who lashes out at the nearest target-Sam. At the play's conclusion, the student who had all the answers for his "pupil", leaves the tearoom confused and in pain.

Fugard himself served as the model for Hally. As he recalled in a 1961 entry in his memoir Notebooks, the man whose full name is Harold Athol Lannigan Fugard (he was called Hally as a youth) was ashamed of his father, a lame man with a drinking problem. But, Fugard did not simply retell what happened in his life, choosing instead to embellish and slightly alter the story For instance, Fugard was fourteen at the time of the play's pivotal episode, but he makes his character Hally three years older. Additionally, the incident where Hally spits in Sam's face did not take place in the cafe but while Hally (Fugard) was bicycling. In the same entry dated March, 1961, Fugard vaguely "recall[s] shyly haunting the servants' quarters in the well of the hotel. . . a world [he] didn't fully understand."

He refers in this entry to Sam as "the most signifi–cant, the only friend of [his] boyhood years. "
Master Harold

See Hally

Sam

Sam, a black man in his mid-forties, is a waiter at the St. George Park Tearoom owned by Hally's parents. He has been employed by the family a long time, at least since the days of the Jubilee Boarding House. He has served as a father figure to young Hally while the boy's father spends time in and out of the hospital recovering from bouts of alcoholism. After one particularly humiliating episode for Hally, where Sam carried the boy's drunken father home on his back, Sam made a kite for Hally out of brown paper and tomato-box wood With water and flour for glue. He built the kite because he wanted Hally to "look up, be proud of something." When Hally, in frustration and rage at things beyond his control, spits in his face, Sam offers his young friend a chance at reconciliation An offer that is refused by Hally.

Not just a servant, Sam is a recognized expert, at least by Willie and Hally, on dance He offers advice to both his fellow waiter, Willie, as well as Hally on the intricacies and symbolic nature of ballroom dancing. "There's no collisions out there, Hally. Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. That's what the moment is all about. To be one of those finalists on that dance floor is like . . . like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen... It's beautiful because that is what we want life to be like".

The character of Sam is based on Sam Semela, a Basuto (a tribe of people who live in the Lesotho region of South Africa) who worked for Fugard's family for fifteen years. Fugard's mother fired Sam when he became careless and began arriving late for work. Fugard remembers his mother saying, "His work went to hell. He didn't seem to care no more."
Willie

Willie also works at the St. George Tea Room as a waiter. Much of his attention is centered on the upcoming ballroom dancing championships. He takes much good-natured ribbing from Sam about practicing his dancing with a pillow. When Hally arrives, Willie assumes the servant role, referring to Hally as "Master Harold." Throughout much of the play, Willie observes, but rarely comments on, the exchanges between Sam and Hally. In the pivotal scene where Hally spits in Sam's face, it is Willie who groans ("long and heartfelt" according to the stage directions); It is Willie who stops Sam from hitting Hally; it is Willie who says that If Hally had spit in his face, he would also want to hit him hard, but would probably just go cry in the back room. Ultimately, Willie crystallizes the emotion of the play "is bad. Is all bad in here now"
Themes

Anger and Hatred

"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys presents in vivid detail what happens in a society constructed in institutional anger and hatred (apartheid). The policies of the South African government in the mid-1950s legislated a certain amount of hatred and anger between whites and blacks. Sam, long a victim of these official and traditional policies, has attempted to transcend the hatred and anger. He acts as a surrogate father to Hally, fortifying the boy's sense of well-being (both through kind acts such as building the kite and through allowing the boy to teach him what he learned in school) and imparting his wisdom to Hally in a series of life lessons (his dance hall metaphors for peaceful coexistence). That a seventeen-year-old can spit in the face of a black man without even the thought of repercussions shines a harsh light onto the institutional policies of hatred that were fostered in South Africa.

Hally must also cope with his own feelings of anger and hatred toward his father, feelings that are conflicted by his simultaneous love for his father. After each of the telephone calls, Hally becomes dark and sullen. The humanitarian affirmations he had been espousing prior to the phone calls evaporate into confusion and anger. Even though Sam is the recipient of the most vicious insult, it is his father who is the true focal point of Hally's rage. Societal taboos and restrictions prevent Hally from telling his father what he really thinks. Those same societal influences allow Hally to redirect his anger and frustration to Sam without fear of consequences. The aftermath, however, is far more destructive than any punishment, as Hally must carry with him the knowledge that he has gravely wronged one of his truest friends.

Human Rights
The South African system of apartheid comes under heavy attack in "Master Harold" . . and the Boys despite the fact that apartheid is not directly addressed in the play. Instead, it is the society that the system has created that is criticized. It is not merely that racial prejudice is legislated in South Africa This prejudice weasels its way into every facet of life, so much so that the language begins to reflect the disparity of power where black men are forced by law to be subservient to white children. The young Hally with the appropriately immature nickname transforms into "Master Harold" in the context of the prejudicial attitudes promoted by apartheid. On the other hand, Sam, the white boy's mentor and surrogate father, is regarded as the "boy," a second-class citizen who is looked down upon. Yet Sam's maturity and honor are clearly shown in his compassion, humanity, and sense of what is right and wrong.

Within the culture of the play, there is nothing unusual about a white child hitting or degrading a black man. It would have been unheard of for the black man in the South Africa of the 1950s to strike back, however. His anger and frustration could only be released on those even more dispossessed: black women and children. The white child hits the black man, the black man hits the black woman, the black woman hits the black child. It is a system in which violence spirals downward in a hierarchy of degradation, as evidenced in Willie's abusive relation–ship with his dancing partner.

**Rites of Passage**

Hally has two courses of action open to him in his journey toward maturity-the loving, reasoned way of Sam or the indifferent, humiliating way of Hally's father and the rest of South African society. Sam offers Hally more than one opportunity to break with institutional forms of racism and embark on a new course. Sam is tempted to strike back after Hally spits in his face but, instead, tries to turn the occasion into a positive learning experience that will guide the boy towards better relationships with his fellow man.

For Sam, the appropriate action is in virtue rather than violence, in reasoning rather
than rage. Sam trusts in his capacity to move Hally to shame through exemplary behavior and an appeal to morality. He forgives the white boy who doesn't know any better and behaves like a "man" in order to teach Hally the basics of honorable behavior. In a challenge to change what has happened through an act of personal transformation, Sam extends his hand toward Hally in a gesture of reconciliation. "You don't have to sit up there by yourself," he says, recalling Hally's feeling of isolation on the "Whites Only" bench. "You know what that bench means now and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is stand up and walk away from it." The invitation to "walk away" is a chance to leave Hally's past behind, to abandon the ways of apartheid and become an honorable adult. Hally, however, is paralyzed by both shame and the ingrained attitudes fostered by society; he cannot break free of them to begin his journey as a "man."
Style

Setting

"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys is a drama set in the St. George's Tea Room on a wet and windy afternoon. The year is 1950 and the location is Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The entire play takes place in the restaurant. While it is a small, enclosed space, the tearoom serves as a microcosm of South African society at large. The attitudes and situations that are displayed in the restaurant are variations on what occurred on a daily basis under the system of apartheid.

Realism

"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys subscribes to the school of realism in that the actions and dialogue of the three characters are very much as they would be in real life. This is not surprising given that the play is based on events from Fugard's own life. Like his titular character, the playwright had the nickname Hally as well as an alcoholic father of whom he was greatly ashamed. Fugard found a surrogate father in a black man who worked at his parents' cafe, a relationship much like the one between Hally and Sam. The play also enacts a historical reality in its portrayal of the actions and attitudes of South Africa at the height of apartheid.

Yet realism in literature is not a mere transcription of actual events; it seeks to use reality as a kind of mirror in which the audience can see themselves. Fugard uses realistic events and settings to strike chords of recognition in his audience. The play may be based on a specific event from his own child-hood, but the themes of societal prejudice are universal. By portraying the severe emotional toll that is exacted when inequality is a fundamental concept in society, the playwright hopes to make his viewers aware and hopefully prevent future instances of injustice. The play is not about the history of apartheid politics but more specifically a family history that
Symbolism

Two images play prominent roles in this drama, the kite and dancing. Made out of tomato-box slats, brown paper, discarded socks, and glue, the kite represents the soaring hopes for equality between the races and the triumph of human love over prejudice and hatred Sam made the kite for Hally to lift the boy's spirits. A past incident is recalled in which Hally's father had become so drunk at a local bar that he had soiled himself. Because the mother was not at home, Hally had to go to the bar and ask permission for Sam to enter in order to take his father home. The event greatly disturbed and de-pressed the boy. Sam tells Hally he made the kite because he "wanted [him] to look up, be proud of something, of [him]self." At the end of the play, after Hally has spit in his face, Sam, in a final attempt at reconciliation, offers Hally the opportu–nity to "fly another kite." "You can't fly kites on rainy days," says Hally. This exchange illustrates the two characters' personalities and is also reflective of South African culture at large. Sam, like many South Africans, wishes to reconcile, put the past behind him, and work towards a better future. Hally, also like many of his countrymen, realizes what he has done is wrong yet is too programmed to attempt change.

Dancing assumes the role as metaphor for life in the play. From the tribulations of Willie and his partner to Willie and Sam's poignant dance that concludes the play, dancing helps the characters makes sense of a world that seems out of control. Describing his idea of a perfect ballroom-meta–phorically an ideal world-Sam tells Hally, "There are no collisions out there... Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. . . Like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen."
Historical Context

Separate and Unequal

In the mid-twentieth century, the country of South Africa was dominated by the policy of apartheid, a separation and segregation based on race. Strict policies prohibited and governed such issues as intermarriage, land ownership, and use of public facilities. In "Master Harold" . . . and the Boys, Sam illustrates the division quite clearly: "I couldn't sit down there and stay with you," referring to a "Whites Only" bench upon which Hally sat. The laws deliberately set out to humiliate people of color, even to the point of determining who could sit on a particular bench Errol Durbach explained the psychopathology of apartheid in Modern Drama: "It is not that racial prejudice is legislated in South Africa. It insinuates itself into every social sphere of existence, until the very language of ordinary human discourse begins to reflect the policy that makes black men subservient to the power exercised by white children."

Fugard's Underground Theater

Many of Fugard's early plays were performed for small private audiences rather than in public theaters, apartheid laws forbade white actors appearing on stage with black actors. In the 1960s, Fugard helped to start the Serpent Players, an all—black theater group made up of residents of New Brighton, the black township of Fugard's hometown of Port Elizabeth. Despite frequent harassment from the police, the Serpent Players continued to perform, and Fugard's involvement with the group did much to establish black South African theater.

In Fugard's first major theatrical success, The Blood Knot, Fugard appeared as a light-skinned nonwhite half brother, a commentary on an individual's search for freedom in a country that denied such independence. In this play, Fugard dramatized the ambivalence and racial hatred that infected many South African relationships,
perverting the "blood knot," or common bond of humanity. Despite voicing the concerns of the country's black majority, Fugard's drama was considered rebellious by the white ruling minority. Because it so implicitly criticized the way of life for many Afrikaners, his work was often banned or heavily censored. It was not until "Master Harold" and the Boys, which had its debut outside of South Africa, that the rest of the world became aware of Fugard's work. With endorsements from critics and audiences in New York and London, "Master Harold's" message was being heard, despite a South African ruling banning performance or publication of the play.

The End of Apartheid

The culture of racism that was promoted by apartheid continued virtually unchecked throughout the 1950s and well into the next three decades. By 1982, apartheid was recognized in much of the free world as a dire injustice against humanity. Activist organizations such as Amnesty International fought for the eradication of such an inherently racist society, going to great lengths to publicize South Africa's criminal treatment of its black majority. Along with the human rights violations of communist China, South Africa's policies were considered among the gravest.

Blacks who spoke out against the government's policies were routinely arrested and imprisoned. The most famous activist/prisoner in the South African penal system was Nelson Mandela, whose public campaigns for equality resulted in a sentence of life imprisonment. At the time of "Master Harold--old"'s first production ill 1982, Mandela was one of the best-known political prisoners in the world. Despite the efforts of the South African government, Mandela's message was being heard across continents. In 1987, while still a prisoner, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1990, then president F. W. de Klerk ordered Mandela's release, after twenty-seven years of incarceration. Soon after, de Klerk dissolved the system of apartheid and agreed to open elections that would allow blacks to both run for office and freely vote. In 1991, Mandela was elected the president of South Africa and his party, the African National Congress, took control of the government. After decades of subordination, South
Africa's black majority finally had an equal voice in their country.
Critical Overview

The summary of "Master Harold"'s action cannot begin to suggest its emotional intensity or its impact on an audience. Many who saw the play in its debut were greatly troubled by the society it depicted. Since that time 'Master Harold" has continued to provoke critics and audiences alike.

Errol Durbach, writing in Modern Drama, as–serted that "Master Harold". . and the Boys is not an overtly political play, but a depiction of "a personal power-struggle With political implica–tions." The only definition that the South African system can conceive of in the relationship of White to Black is one that humiliates black people. This definition "insinuates itself into every social sphere of existence, until the very language of ordinary human discourse begins to reflect the policy that makes black men subservient to the power exer–cised by white children." In the society depicted by Fugard White equals "Master" and Black equals "boy." It is an equation, continued Durbach, that ignores the traditional relationship of labor to man–agement or of paid employee to paying employer.

During the course of the drama, Hally rapidly realigns the components of his long-standing friend–ship with Sam into the socio-political patterns of master and servant. Hally changes from intimate familiarity with his black companions to patroniz–ing condescension to his social inferiors. It is an exercise of power by Hally, himself a "boy" who feels powerless to control the circumstance of his life and therefore seeks some measure of autonomy in his interaction with Sam and Willie.

Robert Brustein, in a review in the New Repub–lic, described 'Master Harold" . . and the Boys as the "quintessential racial anecdote," and ascribed to Fugard's writing "a sweetness and sanctity that more than compensates for what might be prosaic, rhetorical, or contrived about it." There is a sugg–tion that Fugard' s obsession with the theme of racial injustice may be an expression of his own guilt and act of expiation. As Brian Crow noted in the Inter–national Dictionary of Theatre,
"biographical in–formation, however, is not needed in order for the play to make its full impact in the theatre. This is achieved primarily through an audience's empathy with the loving relationship between Hally and Sam and its violation through Hally's inability to cope with his emotional turmoil over his father, and its expression in racism. If to what extent the play manages. . . to transmute autobiographical experience into a larger exploration or analysis of racism in South Africa is arguable; what seems quite certain is its capacity to involve and disturb audiences everywhere."

Yet not all critical reaction to Fugard's work has been positive. Failing to see the play's wider message on racism, Stephen Gray saw "Master Harold" as nothing more than a play about apart–heid. In a 1990 New Theatre Quarterly article, Gray noted that South Africa's dissolution of apartheid has made the play obsolete, stating that it "feels like a museum piece today." Other negative criticism found the play's black characters to be falsely represented As Jeanne Colleran reported in Modern Drama, "To some black critics, the character of Sam is a grotesquerie. His forbearance and forgive–ness, far from being virtues, are embodiments of the worst kind of Uncle Tom-ism." Such reproach prompted Fugard to clarify his intentions during the Anson Phelps Stokes Institute's Africa Roundtable. As Colleran reported, Fugard stated that his intention was to tell a story: "I never set out to serve a cause. . . . The question of being a spokesman for Black politics is something I've never claimed for myself."

Such criticism for "Master Harold" was spo–radic, however The majority of Critics and audi–ences embraced the play as important and thought-provoking. Commenting on Fugard's ability to fuse theatricality with strong political issues, Dennis Walder wrote in Athol Fugard, "Fugard's work. . . contains a potential for subversion, a potential which, I would suggest, is the hallmark of great art, and which qualifies his best work to be called great."
Criticism

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

In this essay Wiles examines Fugard' s play as a political drama, taking into account the dissolution of the apartheid system in South Africa and how that affects contemporary perceptions of the work. He concludes that the play is still relevant as a chronicle of human relations.

What happens to the overall effect of a play when the societal forces that shaped it have changed to the point where the playwright himself says: "A political miracle has taken place in my time." Such might appear to be the case for Athol Fugard and his play "Master Harold". and the Boys. The South African system of apartheid-legislated separation of the races has been dismantled; free and open elections have been held; a black man, Nelson Mandela, has been elected president of the country. The power of whites, regardless of their age or station, to subjugate and humiliate blacks with the full blessing of the government and society at large has evaporated. The question that begs to be asked, then, is: What is this play about if not about political struggle?

By focusing attention on the adolescent antagonist Hally, Fugard creates a more personal drama---, a drama rooted in the uncertainties of a youth who attends a second-rate school and whose parents own and operate a third-rate cafe. Displaying "a few stale cakes," "a not very impressive display of sweets," and "a few sad ferns in pots," the St. George's Park Tea Room hardly seems the seat of power. And, the arrival of Hally, in clothes that are "a little neglected and untidy" and drenched from the heavy rains that keep customers away, does little to prepare the audience for the play's explosive confrontation.

When Hally enters the cafe, it appears that he is glad for the lack of patrons so that he and Sam and Willie can have a "nice, quiet afternoon." There is the implication that both he and the two men have enjoyed these types of days in the past. Hally's world, however, begins to crumble when Sam in--forms him that his mother has gone to the
hospital to bring his father home. Hally's annoyance at the comic books piled on the
table-"intellectual rubbish"-changes into fury when Willie throws a slop rag at Sam,
misses, and hits Hally. Hally swears and tells both Willie and Sam to "stop fooling
around." Hally calls Sam back to have him explain what Hally's mother said before
she left for the hospital. He convinces himself that his father is not coming home, that
Sam heard wrong, and that the world he has created for himself will continue
undisturbed.

His willingness to shift the discussions to the varieties of textbook learning and then to
the more important learning gleaned from the servants quarters at the old Jubilee
Boarding House under the tutelage of Sam and Willie, indicate Hally's inability to accept
that his life is about to change once again. Hally returns to the comfort of the
historical past, discussing Joan of Arc, World War I, Charles Darwin, Abraham
Lincoln, and William Shakespeare with Sam. He also returns to his own familiar past
and the flying of a homemade kite that Sam made for him.

It is the kite that provides Hally with the defining moment of his young life--a black
man and a young white boy enjoying each other's company and a shared
accomplishment. Hally says, "I don't know how to describe it, Sam Ja! The miracle
happened!" Hally appears to want to return to the safety of their shared past when he
mentions to Sam that "[I]'s time for another one, you know." The uncertainties of
adolescence challenge Hally's place, not only in the world at large but in his family as
well. Of his time spent with Sam he summarizes: "It's just that life felt the right size in
there. . . not too big and not too small. Wasn't so hard to work up a bit of courage. It's
got so bloody complicated since then."

Hally's violent reaction to the news that his father is indeed returning home (the stage
directions describe Hally as "seething with irritation and frustration") clearly illustrate
the complications Hally must now face. "Just when things are going along all right,
without fail someone or something will come along and spoil everything. Somebody
should write that down as a fundamental law of the Universe The principle of
perpetual disappointment" Hally's attack on Willie's backside with a ruler and the
"I-allow-you-a-little-freedom-and—-what-do-you-do-with-It" speech show that Hally resists acknowledging the changes and accompanying complications that will inevitably take place when his father returns home.

In the ensuing ballroom dancing discussion (Fugard himself was a dancing champion in his teens), Sam describes the dance finals "like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen." Sam's view of the world as dance floor contrasts sharply with Hally's nostalgic view of life as the right size in the old Jubilee Boarding house. Hally wants things to remain static, to never change. Sam, on the other hand, wants the world "to dance like champions instead of always being a bunch of beginners at it." There are no collisions in Sam's view because the participants have discovered ways of moving around the dance floor without bumping into one another; symbolically, this is Sam's hope that the world can live together peacefully without prejudice or inequality. Hally appears momentarily convinced at the end of this discussion: "We mustn't despair. Maybe there is hope for mankind after all."

But then the phone rings and Hally's world shatters with the news that his mother will be bringing his father home.

At this point, Hally's demeanor becomes "vicious" and "desperate," and at the end of the conversation Hally is "desolate." He slams books and smashes the bottle of brandy his mother had told him to get for his father. With reckless words and ugly laughter, Hally mocks his crippled father, insinuating him into the dance metaphor as the ones who are "out there tripping up everybody and trying to get into the act." His childhood world is now smashed beyond recognition as Hally swears at Sam and chastises him for meddling in something he knows nothing about.

Hally's adolescent posturing leads him to demand that Sam call him "Master Harold, like Willie [does]." Because he cannot control the events surrounding his father's homecoming, Hally lashes out at the convenient targets of Willie and Sam, people he feels he can control. The youth's petulance manifests itself with a vengeance. Hally lets fly with a racist comment and compounds the ugliness of the offense by insisting...
that it is a "bloody good joke."

Hally's final act of naked cruelty is to spit in Sam's face. For Hally, the bond with Sam is forever broken. The demarcation between master and servant is clearly defined.

Although sorely tempted to repay violence with violence, Sam remains the gentle father, the true friend, the moral teacher. Having removed the symbol of servitude (the white servant's jacket) that distinguishes him as a "boy," Sam presents the personal rather than political response to Hally's indignities-an extended hand and the offer to try again and "fly another kite." But Hally has shamed himself beyond compassion and cannot respond to Sam's final lesson.

Errol Durbach wrote in *Modern Drama* that the final dramatic images-the rain of despair, the wind where no kites fly, the hopelessness of relationships ripped apart by racist attitudes, the com-forting music that elicits compassion for children who are victims of their own upbringing, and "the image of a world where 'Whites Only' leave two black men dancing together in an act of solidarity'-represent Fugard's movement between hope and despair, qualified only by the realization that "Master Harold' grows up to be Athol Fugard and that the play itself is an act of atonement to the memory of Sam and 'H.D.F.' [Harold David Fugard]-the Black and White fathers to whom [the play] is dedicated."

So, then, back the original question-what is the play about if not political struggle? It is a play about fathers and sons, and how those roles can be both supportive and destructive. It is a play that illustrates how relationships can be strained by factors beyond the participants. It is a play that offers suggestions and gestures for forgiveness and compassion. It is a play ultimately about race. Not black, or white, or red, or yellow, or brown, but human.

Critical Essay #2

*Sutton's article addresses the symbolism of Fugard's characters looking up and down—both visually and metaphorically through language within the play. He uses several examples to illustrate the characters various states of optimism and pessimism.*

Many writers have noted the conflict between ideal-ism and reality in Athol Fugard's *Master Harold. and the Boys*. Dennis Walder, for example, describes a "gap between the . . . harsh, even violent reality" that the play's characters endure, and the "ideal world imagined by Sam" with his "idea of dancing as a paradigm of universal harmony" [Athol Fugard, Macmillan, 1984]. Others have noted a second, closely related conflict: that between self-esteem and self-loathing Frank Rich observes, "Fugard's point is simple enough: before we can practice compassion. . . we must learn to respect ourselves" [New York Times, May 5, 1982]. But no writer has pointed out that both conflicts are neatly summarized within the play by one more conflict: that between looking up and looking down.

This last conflict is especially suited to a play, because the audience can see characters looking up or down. And Fugard, who usually directs the premieres of his plays, is especially sensitive to the theatre's physical possibilities, as other writers have observed. In his published notebooks, Fugard states, "Only a fraction of my truth is in the words," adding that the rest resides in "the carnal reality of the actor in space and time" (171) Thus, It is no surprise that the conflict between looking up and looking down in *Master Harold* emerges through visual elements as well as through dialogue.

Fugard begins establishing the significance of looking down the moment the play begins. As the curtain rises, the audience sees Sam and Willie, two black servants working in a restaurant in the apartheid South Africa of 1950. Willie is on Ins knees, scrubbing the restaurant floor Tins task forces him to look down, and as Russell Vandenbroucke notes, his Image "is an inescapable reminder of the role blacks are
expected to play" in his society [Truths the Hand Can Touch: The Theatre of Athol Fugard, Theatre Communications Group, 1985]. Thus, look–ing down is associated with an oppressive reality.

Fugard then begins associating looking up with achieving the ideal world symbolized by dance. Just seconds into the play, Willie rises from scrubbing the floor, begins practicing a dance step, and asks Sam for pointers. Part of the advice Sam gives is "Don't look down!" Sam tells Willie that dancing should "look like romance," which he defines as a "love story with happy ending." In the widely available videotape of the play, Sam looks upward as he says, "It must look like romance." Significantly, the actor playing Sam on the videotape, Zakes Mokae, previously played the role on Broad–way under Fugard's direction.

After Sam's comment, Fugard further estab–lishes the conflict between ideal and real. Willie counters Sam's idealistic vision by describing his own reality: Hilda, his girlfriend and dance partner, has no teeth; she has told authorities that he is behind in child support payments to her; he suspects that she has been sleeping with other men and that her child is not really his son; she cannot keep up with the beat when they dance; and because he has beaten her in frustration, she now refuses to come near him, thus leaving him not only estranged from his lover, but also without a partner for the upcoming ballroom dance competition. Facing this reality, Willie has trouble looking up toward an idealistic vision.

Soon Hally, the restaurant owner's teenage son, enters his superior position is immediately estab–lished visually, as Willie jokingly springs to atten–tion and salutes him. But when the ensuing dia–logue reveals Hally's indifference to his exams and Sam's subtle strategies to help him pass them, we realize that Hally lacks self-esteem and that Sam tries to improve the boy's self-image.

Fugard then associates high self-esteem with looking up, as Hally recalls the time that Sam made him a kite. Typically, Hally had assumed that the project would fail, as he states, "I thought, 'Like everything else in my life, here comes another fiasco'" But the
kite did fly and, Hally recalls, "I was so proud of us! . . . I had a stiff neck the next day from looking up so much."

Not until late in the play does Sam reveal why he made the kite, in the process revealing one reason for Hally's low self-esteem. He reminds Hally of the time Hally's father passed out in a bar and had to be carried home by Sam—with Hally, still a child, forced to accompany Sam to enable him to enter the whites-only bar. With Hally following behind, Sam had carried the father home past crowds of staring people, and then had to clean him up from having "messed in his trousers." Sam adds,

After we got him to bed you came back With me to my room and sat is a corner and carried on just looking down at the ground And for days after that' You hadn't done anything wrong, but you went around as If you owed the world an apology for being alive I didn't like seeing that'. If you really want to know, that's why I made you that kite. I wanted you to look up, be proud of something, of yourself. . . .

But by this point, the hope the Hally will look up has faded, for he has subjected Sam to a vicious attack climaxed by his spitting in the black man's face. Thus, Hally has destroyed his relationship with his best friend and surrogate father; he has turned away from Sam's vision of universal coop–eration; and he has increased his own burden of shame, thus lowering his self-esteem still further.

At the end it is Willie, not Hally, who begins to look up and share Sam's vision. He states that he will apologize to Hilda, promise not to beat her anymore, and "romance with her from beginning to end." Then he plays the restaurant's Juke box and asks Sam to dance, saying, "Let's dream... . . You lead, I follow."

Although the stage directions do not specify It, in performance the men's gazes undoubtedly reflect the reversal that has taken place involving Willie and Hally. Because Willie has finally internalized the lessons Sam has been teaching, during the final dance sequence he surely cannot violate Sam's earlier injunction, "Don't look down!" In contrast, because Hally is repeatedly described as ashamed of his outburst,
at the end he is surely avoiding Sam's eyes, looking at the floor just as he did after his father passed out in the bar. The actor who played Willie on the videotape, longtime Fugard associate John Kani, never lets his gaze drift downward during the closing dance sequence; while Matthew Broderick, as Hally, looks down almost constantly during the final portion of the play.

Because of Hally's actions, audiences are utterly harrowed by the play's end. But if we look beyond the play to the reality behind it, there is hope. Since the play is based on actual events from Fugard's childhood, we know that in real life, the boy who spat in the face of a black man named Sam outgrew his anger and racism, and even used the incident to create a play celebrating a vision of universal cooperation. And South Africa has not only abolished apartheid, but has elected a black man as its president. Perhaps things, and people, are finally looking up.

Critical Essay #3

In this essay, Durbach discusses the personal manner in which Fugard's play examines the South African system of apartheid.

In this play, dredged out of Athol Fugard's painful memories of a South African adolescence, at least one event stands out in joyous recollection: the boy's exhilarating, liberating, and ultimately transcendent experience of flying a kite made out of tomato-box slats, brown paper, discarded stock—ings, and string. From the scraps and leavings of the depressingly mundane, the boy intuits the meaning of a soul-life; and he responds to the experience as a "miracle." "Why did you make that kite, Sam?" he asks of the black servant whose gift it was—but the answer is not given until much later in the play. Nor can Hally recollect the reason for Sam's failure to share in the experience of high-flying delight.

HALLY. . . You left me after that, didn't you? You explained how to get It down, we lied it to the bench so that I could Sit and watch It, and you went away I wanted you to stay, you know. I was a little scared of having to look after It by myself
SAM (Quietly) I had work to do, Hally.

In the final moments of the play Sam provides the simple explanation: the kite had been a symbolic gift to console the child against the degrading shame of having to cope with a drunken and crippled father—an attempt to raise his eyes from the ground of humiliation:

That's not the way a boy grows up to be a man'. But the one person who should have been teaching you what that means was the cause of your shame If you really want to know, that's why I made you that kite. I wanted you to look up, be proud of something, of yourself.
The second question has an answer more readi-ly understood by one familiar with apartheid's so-called "petty" operations:

I couldn't sit down there and stay with you. It was a "Whites Only" bench. You were too young, too excited to notice then But not anymore If you're not careful. . . Master Harold you're going to be sitting up there by yourself for a long time to come, and there won't be a kite in the sky.

This, in essence, is the psychopathology of apartheid. Growing up to be a "man" within a system that deliberately sets out to humiliate black people, even to the point of relegating them to separate benches, entails the danger of habitual indifference to the everyday details that shape black-white relationships and, finally, pervert them. It is not merely that racial prejudice is legislated in South Africa. It insinuates itself into every social sphere of existence, until the very language of ordinary human discourse begins to reflect the policy that makes black men subservient to the power exercised by white children. Hally, the sev-enteen-year-old white boy whose affectionately diminutive name is an index of his social immaturity, is "Master Harold" in the context of attitudes fostered by apartheid. And the black man who is his mentor and surrogate father is the "boy"-in all but compassion, humanity, and moral intelligence.

This, finally, is the only definition that the South African system can conceive of in the relationship of White to Black; and Hally, with the facility of one habituated to such power play, saves face and forestalls criticism by rapidly realigning the components of friendship into the socio-politi-cal patterns of mastery and servitude. Like quicksil-ver, he shifts from intimate familiarity with his black companions, to patronising condescension to his social inferiors, to an appalling exercise of power over the powerless "boys" simply by choos-ing to play the role of "baas":

HALLY Sam' Willie' (Grabs his ruler and gives Willie a vicious whack on the bum) How the hell am I supposed to concentrate With the two of you behaving like bloody children' [ ..] Get back to your work. You too, Sam (His ruler) Do you want another one, Willie?
(SAM and Willie return to their work. HALLY uses the opportunity to escape from his unsuccessful attempt at homework He struts around like a little despot, ruler in hand, giving vent to his anger and frustration)

Within the culture portrayed in the play there is nothing particularly remarkable about a white child hitting a black man. It would have been unheard of on the other hand for a black man, in the South Africa of the 1950s, to strike back. His anger and frustration could be unleashed only upon those even more pitifully dispossessed of the human rights to dignity and respect. The white child hits the black man, and the black man hits the black woman. It is a system in which violence spirals downwards in a hierarchy of degradation-as Fugard shows in Willie's relationship with his battered dancing part–ner who can no longer tolerate the abuse.

A very simple racial equation operates within apartheid: White = "Master"; Black = "Boy". It is an equation which ignores traditional relationships of labour to management, of paid employee to paying employer, or contractual relationships be–tween freely consenting parties. And Sam's attempt to define the nature of his employment in conven–tional terms is countermanded by Hally's application of the equation:

HALLY You're only a servant here, and don't forget It [. ] And as far as my father is concerned, all you need to remember is that he's your boss
SAM (Needled at last) No, he Isn't I get paid by your mother
HALLY Don't argue With me, Sam'
SAM Then don't say he's my boss
HALLY He's a white man and that's good enough for you

What needles Sam is the thought of being paid for his work by a bigot who shows him none of the simple human respect that is everyone's most ur–gent need in Fugard's world-the white child's in a family that shames him, and the black man's in a culture that humiliates him. It is the common denominator that Sam and Hally share; and the ulti– mate goal of "Master" Harold's power-play is to secure his own desire for
self-respect at the expense of a man whose native dignity proves all but imper−vious to these attempts to "boy" him. It is a self-defeating and self-destructive ploy, Imposed by threat and blackmail upon a relationship which has all the potential for mutual comfort, support, and love. It is the human content of their shared affec−tion that Hally is about to petrify into the equation of apartheid:

HALLY To begin with, why don't you also start calling me Master Harold, like Willie
SAM [.. ] And if I don't?
HALLY You might lose your job.
SAM (*Quietly and very carefully*) If you make me say it once, I'll never call you anything else again [ ] You must decide what it means to you.
HALLY Well, I have. It's good news because that is exactly what Master Harold wants from now on. Think of it as a little lesson in respect, Sam, that's long overdue. [ . . . ] I can tell you now that somebody who will be glad to hear I've finally given it to you will be my Dad Yes' He agrees with my Mom. He's always going on about It as well. "You must teach the boys to show you more respect, my son."

"Teaching respect" loses all semantic value in the context of apartheid. It means coercion by threat, just as "showing respect" means acquies−cence through enforced abasement. It is easy to teach Willie respect—one does it with the stick, and with impunity because Willie lacks the necessary sentiment of self−regard to oppose such treatment. His predictable response is to insist that Hally whack Sam as well—the sole comfort of the wretched being to recognise fellow−sufferers in distress. But Hally cannot *command* Sam's respect; and if he cannot *win* it, his only recourse is to humiliate Sam to the point where, by default, his own pathetic superiority supervenes. Finally, the only power left to Hally is the wounding power of bigotry supported by a system in which "black" is, *Ipsa facta*, base. Echoing his father's words, associating himself with the very cause of his shame, he spreads the "filth" he has been taught in a racist joke—the penultimate weapon in his arsenal of power. It is a crude pun about a "nigger's arse" not being "fair"; and one senses, in the numb incredul−ity of the two

Critical Essay #3
black men, an irreversible redefinition of their relationship with their white charge. In the ensuing silence, he belabours the pun—the double meaning of "fair" as light in colour and just and decent—and is ensnared in the moral implications of his bid for respect through insult and abuse:

SAM You're really trying hard to be ugly, aren't you?
And why drag poor Willie into It? He's done nothing to you except show you the respect you want so badly. That's also not being fair, you know, and I mean just or decent.

And to underscore the embarrassment that Hally has brought upon himself, Sam performs an action of rebuke through self-abasement that reveals both the reality and the vulnerability of the "nigger's arse" -the thing that the Master feels at liberty to mock at and kick: "He drops his trousers and underpants and presents his backside for HALLY's inspection." His nakedness is clearly no laughing matter. It calls in question the justice and decency and fairness of an entire system which can encourage a child so to humiliate a man. Its indictment is Dostoevskian in its power to shame.

Hally's countermeasure is to exercise his power to degrade with impunity: he spits in Sam's face, saving his own by fouling another's and, in so doing, placing Sam forever in the role of "boy" to his "Master". It is a gesture of contempt and angry frustration, the adolescent's protest against his own sense of degradation horribly misdirected against the wrong source, as Sam instantly realises: "The face you should be spitting in," he says, "is your father's. . . but you used mine, because you think you're safe inside your fair skin. . . and this time I don't mean just or decent." It is Hally's "white" father who ensures the "principle of perpetual disappointment" in the boy's life—the crippled alcoholic who must be dragged out of bars fouled in his own excrement, whose chamber pots must be emptied by the boy, and whose imminent return from the hospital provokes in Hally the thought of further humiliating servitude. But it is Hally's black "father" who must bear the brunt of his anguish and his shame. Sam has become his "spitting boy" just as Willie had been his "whipping boy", the recipient of
a contempt which he cannot reveal to his father whom he both loves and despises. This is the moment, Fugard admitted in an interview, "which totally symbolised the ugliness, the potential ugliness waiting for me as a White South African."

The overwhelming shame of the actual event is recorded in the section of Fugard's Notebooks dealing with his childhood memories of growing up in Port Elizabeth. But he sets the play five years later, in 1950, that annus mirabilis of Apartheid legislation; and Fugard's political point of view is nowhere more clearly revealed than in his location of the encroaching ugliness of South Africa's destiny in a personal rather than a national failure of moral decency. Despite the statutory enforcement of racist laws in the 1950s, apartheid (like charity) is seen to begin at home, in the small details of everyday existence. There is no sense, in the play, of the Nationalist Government's Population Registration Act of 1950 with its racial system of classification by colour, the Group Areas Act of 1950 which demarcated the areas of permissible domicile for the races and controlled the ownership of property in those areas, the 1950 Amendment to the immorality Act which prohibited sexual contact across the colour bar, or the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 which empowered the minister of Justice to ban suspect individuals Without trial or right of appeal—indeed, without even notifying the detainee of the nature of his offence. There is nothing of Kafka's nightmare about Fugard's world, nothing of the political absurdity of Vaclav Havel's vision of man's soul under totalitarianism. Nor does he invoke the ridiculous terms of the Separate Amenities Act which, in 1953, would subject a black man sitting on a "Whites Only" bench ("reserved for the exclusive use of persons belonging to a particular race or class, being a race or class to which he does not belong") to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or imprisonment not exceeding three months, or to both.

Fugard's is not a drama of political protest nor an expose of a corrupt regime entrenched in its position of power. His detractors on the militant Left call him bitterly to task for falling to fight against the system, just as his Right-wing detractors point to the obsolescence of his political vision—to the disappearance of "Whites Only" signs on South African benches in the 1980s. Plays like Statements after an Arrest under the
Immorality Act or Sizwe Bansi is Dead may, indeed, seem anachronistic after the rescinding of the immorality Act and the Pass laws with which they deal. But the psychopathology of apartheid in Fugard's drama is quite distinct from Government policy. There is no guarantee, when the letter of all the 1950's legislation has passed into oblivion, that the attitudes which informed its spirit will disappear as well. The Laws are Crucial his—torical background to Fugard's world, but these attitudes are the substance of his most insistent misgivings about apartheid's operation upon human relationships.

In the absence of explicit political comment, it might seem tendentious to equate the social awk—wardness of a troubled teenager With government policy Hally's condescending attitude towards his "boys", his failure to share with them any of the chocolate and cake and ice-cream that he is con—stantly consuming—these may be evidence of an ingrained arrogance and selfishness rather than a culturally conditioned attitude to an "inferior" race. But these unobtrusive details underscore the more overt acts of insulting racism in the play. Having whacked one "boy" With a ruler and spat in the other's face, his last shamefaced act is to remove the wretched day's takings from the cash register essentially small change—and tell Willie to lock up for him. One entrusts the "boy" with the keys to the tearoom, but not with the few coins which might tempt him to play the juke-box or take the bus home. One may give a "boy" some cake or choco—late, but never offer It. Every social gesture, within the South African context, becomes an affirmation or a negation of the principle of apartheid; and every act is more or less political.

Against the petty and unconscious cruelties of Hally, Fugard Juxtaposes the magnanimity of Sam: the compassionate father, the good friend, the moral teacher. He offers a solution to the predicament, again in personal rather than political terms—a response so lacking in revolutionary fervour as to alienate, once again, the new generation of post—Sowetan critics of Athol Fugard's drama. Mastering his violence and the desire to strike Hally for spitting at him, Sam carefully considers the strategy of aggression With Willie, and they both agree to suffer the indignity in stoical resignation.
WILLIE [. . .] But maybe all I do is go cry at the back. He's little boy, Boet Sam little white boy. Long trousers now, but he's still little boy.
SAM (*His violence ebbing away into defeat as quickly as it flooded*)
You're right. So go on, then, groan again, Willie. You do it better than me.

Though struck to the quick, they endure the insult with weeping and groaning rather than striking back. There is no revolution in the St. George's Park Tearoom-but not because the black man is culturally conditioned to patience, nor for fear of putting his Job in jeopardy. In Fugard's world, as in Prospero's, the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance, in humane reasoning rather than fury; and Sam trusts, once again, to his capacity for moving Master Harold to shame through moral suasion and exemplary behaviour. He forgives the little white boy who knows no better, and behaves like a "man" in order to teach him the rudiments of "manly" behaviour. Turning the other cheek may not be politically expedient as a response to apart–heid, but where problems are engendered at the personal level it is only at the personal level that they may be resolved.

"I oscillate," says the precocious Hally early in the play, "between hope and despair for this world. . . . But things will change, you wait and see." On the whole, Sam's politics are ranged on the side of hope—the hope born, initially, of a naive vision of reform and racial harmony but modulating, in the final scenes, to the more sombre hope of salvaging the scrap of value remaining in his relationship with the little white master. He dreams of a world transformed by some benevolent reformer saviour like Napoleon for whom all men were equal before the law, or another Abraham Lincoln who fought for the oppressed, or a Tolstoy, or Gandhi, or Christ; and he envisions life as a celestial ballroom in which no accidents occur, in which powers are harmoniously aligned on the global dance floor. But, like Hally, he is forced to acknowledge the harsh reality of things: we go on waiting for the "Man of Magnitude", he admits, bumping and colliding until we're sick and tired. All that remains is the small gesture, the little act of decency that may turn a fragment of the dream into something real. This, finally, is what he hopes for. He takes off his servant's jacket and returns in
clothes that no longer distinguish him as a "boy"; he addresses Hally by the affectionate diminutive once again; and he offers, very simply, the chance to "fly another kite." "You can't fly kites on rainy days," says Hally-and the rain and the wind squalling beyond the windows of the tearoom assume the depressing and hopeless condition of the entire South African situation. Better weather tomorrow? No one is sure.

At this point in the Yale Repertory production of the play, the excellent Zakes Mokae playing Sam extends his hand tentatively towards Hally in a gesture of appeal and reconciliation as important to his well-being as to the boy's; and he challenges him to change the situation through an act of person–al transformation which flies in the face of his cultural and political conditioning: "You don't have to sit up there by yourself," he says, recalling the boy's Isolation on the "Whites Only" bench. You know what that bench means now, and you can leave it any time you choose. All you've got to do is stand up and walk away from it." But ingrained attitudes die hard. Paralysed by shame but incapable of extending himself towards the black man, Hally hesitates and then walks out into the rain as Sam's hand crumples in its gesture.

If anyone has learned a lesson from this bleak afternoon of moral instruction it is the simple, inarticulate Willie who, in his effort to comfort Sam, endorses his dream-Ideal of life as a ballroom. He vows never to beat up his partner again, and slips his bus fare into the juke-box which" comes to life in the gray twilight, blushing its way through a spectrum of soft, romantic colours. " "Let's dream," he says. And the two men sway through the room to Sarah Vaughan's melancholy lullaby to an unhappy child-"Little man you're crying." The final dra–matic image is suffused with the ambiguous tonalities typical of Fugard's best work: the ram of despair beyond the windows, the wind in which no kites fly, the hopelessness of a situation where people are driven apart by racist attitudes, the con–soling music which evokes our compassion for children who are casualties of their upbringing, the hope that shame and embarrassment might induce change in a morally receptive child, the delusory political vision of racial harmony on the South African dance floor, and the image of a world where "Whites Only" leave two black men dancing to–gether in an act of
solidarity. It is a typically Fugardian oscillation between hope and despair, qualified only by the realisation that "Master Har–old" grows up to be Athol Fugard and that the play itself is an act of atonement and moral reparation to the memory of Sam and "H.D.F."-the Black and the White fathers to whom it is dedicated.

It would clearly be misleading to claim that "Master Harold" . . . and the boys addresses the growing complexity of apartheid politics in the South Africa of 1987. It is a "history" play-a family "history" written, like O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, as an exorcism of the tormented ghosts of his childhood; but it is also a phase of South African "history", an anachronistic back–ward glance to a time when black men in their stoical optimism still dreamed of social change and when white boys might have been able to grasp the implications of "Whites Only" benches and choose to walk away from them. It deals with a rite of passage clumsily negotiated, a failure of love in a personal power-struggle With political implica–tions. Alan Paton, writing in the Same time-frame of history, projects a similar vision of tenuous hope for racial harmony–and also the dreadful consequences of its deferment. MSimangu, the black priest in Cry, the Beloved Country, speaks the powerful subtext beneath the action of Fugard's play:

But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it.

He was grave and silent, and then he said sombrelly, I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they are turned to loving, they will find we are turned to hating.

Media Adaptations

"Master Harold". and the Boys was adapted as a television film in 1985. Produced by Lorimar pictures and directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, this production starred Matthew Broderick as Hally, John Kani as Willie, and longtime Fugard collaborator Zakes Mokae as Sam. It is available on video through Facets Video.
Research the South African system of apartheid. Compare that system to the segregated system of "separate but equal" that existed in the United States in the 1950s. What differences in the respective governments of the two countries enabled the U.S. to overcome racial inequalities before South Africa?

Discuss the episode of the kite, particularly in the light of Sam's explanation after Hally has spit in his face.

Sam discusses the complexities of human relations by using the metaphor of dance. Show how this metaphor works in the context of the play.

Hally has two one-sided telephone conversations during the play. Discuss his mood after each one. Why is the second call more troubling than the first?

Almost all of the dialogue in the play is between Sam and Hally. What is Willie's role in this drama? Is it mere observer? Or is his role more significant than that?
Compare & Contrast

**1950s:** In South Africa, the system of apartheid legislatess the separation of the races. Black people are forced to live in designated areas and may only use designated public facilities.

**1980s:** The world condemns the policy of apartheid. Many people across the globe protest the involvement of businesses in South Africa and demonstrate for divestiture of investments in that country.

**Today:** The government of South Africa has officially renounced the policy of apartheid and has elected a black leader, Nelson Mandela.

**1950s:** In America, pre-World War II race restrictions (Jim Crow laws) are discarded. Black people assert their civil rights with marches, demonstrations, sit-down strikes, and boycotts. The Supreme Court strikes down the doctrine of "separate but equal" in the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision. In the ensuing decade, the Civil Rights Movement will reach a fever pitch, creating sweeping legislation to promote equality among races.

**1980s:** While race relations in the U.S. have improved since the 1950s and 1960s, there is still considerable inequality to be addressed. These disparities are trivial compared with the plight of South African blacks, however. Expanding public knowledge of apartheid renews many Americans' commitment to racial harmony and equality in their own country.

**Today:** The U.S. has instituted policies that forbid discrimination based on race or color in the areas of employment, housing, and access to government services. Despite the obvious benefits of such policies, many conservative politicians seek to eradicate such practices as Affirmative Action, claiming that it denies qualified whites equal opportunity.
What Do I Read Next?

*Selected Stories*, a collection of short stories by Nobel-Prize winning author Nadine Gordimer A white South African like Fugard, Gordimer brings her characters and the African landscape they inhabit to life.

*Hamlet*, one of William Shakespeare's classic tragedies, was written In approximately 1603. It concerns a young man who has unresolved issues with both his father and his uncle. His inability to articulate his feelings causes him to lash out at people he loves with serious consequences.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), a novel by Harper Lee that examines the events of a American town in the South during the Depression. The novel confronts issues of racism and power through the story a black man on trial for the rape of a white woman and the white lawyer who defends him.

*Black like Me* (1961) a memoir written by John Howard Griffin, recounts the adventures of a white man who changed the pigment of his skin to resemble a black man In the 1950s In the American South. The books offer a unique perspective on the treatment of African Ameri—cans during a pivotal time in the history of civil rights.
Further Reading

Brians, Paul "Athol Fugard. 'Master Harold' . and the Boys” at http://www.wsu.edu'8080/-brians/anglophone/ fugard html

A website containing notes to the Penguin Plays edition of "Master Harold" and the Boys (1984); organized by page number.


Polarized by decades of apartheid, black and white South Africans now face the challenges of racial coexistence and economic growth is a new, multiracial nation This incisive examination of the radical conse–quences of apartheid's demise offers a penetrating look at South Africa on the brink of racial and historic change.

"Underdog's South African Independent Film Site" at http / /www safilm.org.za/.

A home page with links to Film Festivals, Film Schools, show data's SA Film Site, and other inde–pendent South AfrIcan media artists.


Walder is a South African educator and critic. Hi s book offers analysis of Fugard's career up through 1984 and includes considerable discussion of "Mas– ter Harold."
Sources


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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to
information about the work. Part of Gale's For Students Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on classic novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

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

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

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

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
• Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.

• Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as The Narrator and alphabetized as Narrator. If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name Jean Louise Finch would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname Scout Finch.

• Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.

• Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.

• Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.

• Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first
received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.

- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).
- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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


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


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


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