

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
LIBRARY EXTENSION PUBLICATION

VOL. VIII

APRIL, 1942

NO. 3

ADVENTURES IN READING

Fifteenth Series

AGATHA BOYD ADAMS



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
CHAPEL HILL

MCMXLII

STUDY OUTLINES

EXTENSION BULLETINS

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Current Books of 1923-1924; 1924-1925; 1925-1926. C. S. Love.
Adventures in Reading Series, 1926-1927; 1928-1929. Russell Potter.
Adventures in Reading Series, 1929-1930; 1930-1931. M. N. and R. P. Bond.
Adventures in Reading Series, 1931-1932; 1933. M. N. Bond.

BIOGRAPHY

Other People's Lives, 1928; 1931; 1933. C. S. Love.
Heroes of the American Revolution. 1931. F. M. Green.
Studies in Confederate Leadership. 1931. F. M. Green.

LITERATURE: SOUTHERN, AMERICAN, AND FOREIGN TRANSLATIONS

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Southern Literature. 1926. Addison Hibbard.
The South in Contemporary Literature. 1930. Addison Hibbard.
Recent Poetry from the South. 1928. Addison Hibbard.
Twentieth Century American Literature. 1933. M. N. Bond.
Our Heritage: A Study Through Literature of the American Tradition.
1927. J. H. Hanford.
American Literature. 1927. Addison Hibbard.
Folklore. 1929. R. S. Boggs.
Development of the Short Story: English and American. 1926. L. B. Wright.
The French Novel in English Translation. 1930. U. T. Holmes.
Contemporary Spanish Literature in English Translation. 1929. A. B. and
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HISTORY

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Romance of the Western Frontier. 1932. F. M. Green.
Modern Russia. 1932. E. E. and E. E. Ericson.
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American Artists and Southern Artists of Note. 1929. M. deB. Graves.
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Great Composers. 1925. P. J. Weaver.
America and Her Music. 1931. Lamar Stringfield.
Everyday Science. 1933. C. E. Preston.
Books of Travel. 1931. U. T. Holmes.

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THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LIBRARY
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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Of the Library of the University of North Carolina



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STUDY OUTLINES

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- *4. May, 1935. *Europe in Transition*. Phillips Russell & C. M. Russell.
5. June, 1935. *Other People's Lives, Fourth Series*. C. S. Love.
6. July, 1935. *The Story of Books*. R. B. Downs.

VOLUME II

1. October, 1935. *Adventures with Music and Musicians*. A. D. McCall.
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- *3. April, 1936. *Adventures in Reading, Eighth Series*. M. N. Bond.
4. May, 1936. *Other People's Lives, Fifth Series*. C. S. Love.
5. June, 1936. *Adventures in Reading, Ninth Series*. A. B. Adams.
6. July, 1936. *Modern Plays and Playwrights*. C. M. Russell.

VOLUME III

- *1. October, 1936. *Adventures Around the World*. Lucile Kelling.
- *2. January, 1937. *The Modern Woman*. E. C. Baity.
3. April, 1937. *Literary Backgrounds of Present Day Germany*. A. E. Zucker and W. P. Friederich.
4. May, 1937. *India in Revolution*. E. E. and E. E. Ericson.
- *5. June, 1937. *Adventures in Reading, Tenth Series*. A. B. Adams.
6. July, 1937. *The Theatre Today*. M. G. Holmes.

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VOLUME IV

1. October, 1937. *Other People's Lives, Sixth Series*. C. S. Love.
2. January, 1938. *American Humor*. E. C. Downs & R. B. Downs.
3. April, 1938. *Contemporary Poetry*. Lucile Kelling.
4. May, 1938. *Building and Furnishing a Home*. E. C. Baity.
- *5. June, 1938. *Adventures in Reading, Eleventh Series*. A. B. Adams.
6. July, 1938. *Famous Women of Yesterday and Today*. Third Edition. C. S. Love.

VOLUME V

1. October, 1938. *Political Problems in Present-Day Europe. First Series*. Werner P. Friederich.
2. January, 1939. *Political Problems in Present-Day Europe. Second Series*. C. B. Robson, C. H. Pegg, A. B. Dugan, and J. L. Godfrey.
3. April, 1939. *Adventures in Reading, Twelfth Series*. A. B. Adams.
4. May, 1939. *The Modern Woman's Bookshelf*. E. C. Baity.
5. June, 1939. *Adventures Around the World, Second Series*. Lucile Kelling.
6. July, 1939. *At Home with the Fine Arts*. M. G. Holmes.

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VOLUME VI

1. October, 1939. *The New Frontier*. W. W. Drake.
2. January, 1940. *United States Mural; a Study of Regional Novels*. Lucile Kelling.
3. April, 1940. *Other People's Lives, Seventh Series*. C. S. Love.
4. May, 1940. *Adventures in Reading, Thirteenth Series*. A. B. Adams.
5. June, 1940. *Adventures with Opera*. A. D. McCall.
6. July, 1940. *Arts and Crafts in Georgian England*. M. N. Bond.

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4. May, 1941. *Religion and Contemporary Life*. Dale Spearman.
5. June, 1941. "Eyes South." E. S. Godfrey and J. L. Godfrey.
6. July, 1941. *Adventures in Reading, Fourteenth Series*. A. B. Adams.

VOLUME VIII

1. October, 1941. *The Modern Woman's Unfinished Business*. E. C. Baity.
2. January, 1942. *Understanding the News*. Walter Spearman.
3. April, 1942. *Adventures in Reading, No. 15*. A. B. Adams.
4. May, 1942. *Other People's Lives, Eighth Series*. C. S. Love.
5. June, 1942. To be announced later.
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THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LIBRARY
CHAPEL HILL, N. C.

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CHAPTER I

ROOTS OF A NATION

“ . . . The free and democratic course;
The hardest of all paths to steer upon,
The easiest assailed, yet, in the end,
The only forward track.”

With his most recent book, John Dos Passos joins the distinguished company of novelists who in the year of disaster 1941 have found it impossible to write fiction. *The Ground We Stand On*, published before the United States was actually at war, anticipates a mood and a desire now in the minds of most citizens of this country: a wish to formulate the meaning of America, to examine our past, analyze our heritage, and thus appreciate clearly for what it is we fight. For each individual the method of this re-dedication may be different; it may be as simple as a return in memory to the good places and good traditions of childhood, or it may be as intellectual as a re-reading and study of some of the basic documents from which our democratic ideals derive. The Sunday after our entry into war, the *New York Times* magazine section printed the Bill of Rights on its front page, and inside carried quotations from some of those leaders who in times past have most aptly crystallized in unforgettable words the meanings of our national life. This wish to go back to the fountainheads of our nation was probably uppermost in many minds that day.

In *The Ground We Stand On* John Dos Passos uses his skill as an experienced novelist to draw out of history and make live again some of the figures whom he considers most significant in our past. *The Ground We Stand On* is neither conventional history nor conventional biography; it is rather an interpretation of history by a lively modern mind, keenly aware of cross currents, of contrasts, and of far-reaching influences. Dos Passos does not hesitate to make use of the flash-back methods of the movies; that is, he does not feel bound to a strict chronological order, but puts related events into revealing juxtaposition, so that we understand, for instance, the Cromwellian revolution as a leaven still working in England today, and the French Revolution as neither completely finished nor completely understood in France.

It is interesting to remember that back in the twenties and

thirties John Dos Passos was one of a group of young writers who were most bitterly critical of American life, who professed themselves as disillusioned with every thing in the United States. His novels of that period show the first World War without heroes or ideals, and New York without anything to admire. But, as John Chamberlain remarked in reviewing the present work, "No man could have written *The Ground We Stand On* out of a mere eleventh hour conversion"; reading it persuades one that Dos Passos' earlier criticism of America must have been the chastisement of love rather than of disgust, and that he is in the present instance moved by genuine patriotism.

The poems of Ridgely Torrence, collected now for the first time, express that strong idealism which is one of the roots of the American way of life, one of the component parts of the "American dream." Read as such, they form a significant corollary to Dos Passos' analysis of the origins of our democracy.

1. AN EXAMINATION OF PATRIOTISM

The Ground We Stand On, by John Dos Passos

How does the quotation from Joel Barlow, printed here on the fly-leaf, apply to this book?

Summarize the first chapter; what does he consider "the use of the past"? Do you agree with him that "Americans lack a sense of history"?

What parallel does he draw between "the little group of Virginians around Jefferson and Madison," and the task the United States faces today?

Why does he select Roger Williams and Thomas Jefferson for especial attention?

Give an outline of his concise biography of Roger Williams. Why does the author introduce here an account of the revolution led by Cromwell?

Discuss the glimpse of John Milton. What is his place in the long fight for human liberties?

Show the relationship between the French and American Revolutions. Why is Benjamin Franklin brought in? What does he add to this study of American roots?

Why does the author call his chapter on Samuel Adams "Spawn of the old Cromwellians"? What does Adams represent in this study? If you read *Oliver Wiswell* you will remember a very different picture of him.

What phrase does the author use to describe Monticello? Why does he select this especial period of Jefferson's life?

Does Dos Passos devote a disproportionate amount of space to Joel Barlow? Why is he so much interested in this little-known figure?

In what ways do you think the author's skill and experience as a novelist are evident here? Does he write better as historian and biographer, or as a novelist?

Why does he consider Hugh Brackenridge significant?

What other men in the early history of the United States would you add to Dos Passos' selection?

Discuss the final sentence of the book in relation to present day events.

Additional Reading:

U. S. A., by John Dos Passos.

Oliver Wiswell, by Kenneth Roberts.

The Tree of Liberty, by Elizabeth Page.

2. A BELIEVER IN THE AMERICAN WAY

Poems, by Ridgely Torrence

Some of these poems, such as "Evensong," have already become familiar in anthologies. Others have been written under the stress of present world events. For the purposes of this program, select especially those which have most meaning in the present crisis.

What lines in "Light" seem to you significant? Note especially "Night-islanded life, unquenched, slowly widens its room . . . as it lifts from the steadfast tides of the ocean of change."

What are the allusions in "Europa and the Bull"? Comment on the last two lines.

Discuss "Lincoln's Dream" as connected with the ideas of *The Ground We Stand On*. The following lines seem worthy of discussion:

"So with all wars; there never yet was one
That might not, with clear vision and just action
Have been avoided."

"Whatever shadows, bolts, disasters, dooms
Loom from the sea or air to bring her down,
None are so dangerous as those within."

Contemporary poetry is frequently condemned for being too obscure. Do you find that true of Ridgely Torrence's poems? Do you find in them an affirmative spirit? A tone of idealism?

CHAPTER II

“IN THE AMERICAN GRAIN”

“. . . For man's least deeds are fables
To these old-natured gods, these ancient walkers.”

—MARK VAN DOREN

To spin from a familiar folk-song rich and complicated music; that is the history of many a great symphony. Such music can only be achieved by following every association, every subtle far-off memory aroused by the familiar tune. It is some such orchestration that both Caroline Gordon and Mark Van Doren have given to the oft-told tale of frontiersman and Indians in *Green Centuries* and *The Mayfield Deer*.

The story of the frontiersman is deep in the racial memory of America; a story not only frequently read in history book or novel, but remembered in the blood. As children we have all played Indians in the gigantic forests of the back yard. The long climb through laurel thickets toward the gap, the faint trail along the westward-flowing stream, the arrow from behind the tree, the flaming stockade—the color and the feel of these are closer to us than the printed page. This well-known material is enriched and given new significance in both of the books to be studied here.

Caroline Gordon writes of the journey over the great wall of the Appalachians as if from memory of actual experience, not from hours of research. The story is that of her own forebears, and she tells it in all the detail and distinctness of reality. The reader follows her hero, Orion Outlaw, from the frontier town of Salisbury across the mountains to the lovely spot in a grove of great beech trees on the Holston river where he made his new home; with him we feel the threat and mystery of the forests, the hard rocks and cold shining water of the trail, we smell wood smoke and taste bear steaks, and delight in the warm security of a new log cabin in the wilderness.

In *The Mayfield Deer* Mark Van Doren has elaborated a simple frontier legend into an allegory whose suggestions are limited only by the responsiveness of the reader. This poem calls for active cooperation on the part of the reader, the cooperation that is always necessary for the fullest enjoyment of good poetry and good music. We cannot sit passively and let a facile tale

amuse us; we need to read with mind aware and ears acute to catch the most delicate overtones. Through the legend of the wanton lad who killed a pet deer the poet has dramatized the philosophical problem: shall a man declare the truth that is in him at the risk of his life? It is not difficult to find here, told in poetry that is genuinely American in tone and phrase as well as setting, a parable for our own age. The decision which Seth had to make is ultimately the decision of our nation: that truth is more important than safety.

1. ON THE DANIEL BOONE TRAIL

Green Centuries, by Caroline Gordon

Describe Salisbury at the beginning of the story; discuss also the time, and the home background of Orion.

How is Daniel Boone presented? Does this tally with other descriptions of him?

What was the rôle of Judge Henderson in Daniel Boone's expeditions?

What was an "infare"? Describe the one which took place at Lovelatt's.

Trace the part of the Regulators in this story.

Follow on a map the journey of Outlaw and Cassie.

Show how Archy's life with the Indians gives the author an opportunity to contrast their way of life with that of the frontiersman.

Comment on her reconstruction of Indian life, as in the chapter on the Dark Lantern. Notice the ritualistic quality of Indian life.

Discuss her characterization of Atta Kulla Kulla, Dragging Canoe, the Owl: are they clearly individualized?

Does the author show tenderness and understanding in her treatment of Cassie and the children? Recall Malcolm's first adventure alone in the forest.

William Rose Benét criticized the ending of this novel for too much piling on of suffering. Do you agree with this criticism?

Discuss the author's methods of giving reality to her descriptions of frontier life; her knowledge of backwoods cooking, her delight in food, her wide acquaintance with all the lore of field and stream, of animals and birds.

Is this a novel of imagination, or one based entirely upon research and experience? Do you think the author has fully absorbed her material before setting it down? What part does imagination play?

How does this compare with other novels of frontier life which you have read? Some are suggested below.

Additional Reading:

The Great Meadow, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

The Trees, by Conrad Richter.

The Loon Feather, by Iola Fuller.

Aleck Maury, Sportsman, by Caroline Gordon. (This shows the same extensive knowledge of woodcraft and field lore as *Green Centuries*)

2. VARIATIONS ON A TURKEY-BONE FLUTE

The Mayfield Deer, by Mark Van Doren

In order to do justice to a report on this poem, it should be read through twice; first rapidly to get the story, and then more slowly, to savor the poetry, and to catch the implicit meanings.

Tell the story and describe the setting briefly. Notice that the time is November, and that the colors throughout are November colors.

Why do you think Seth finds it impossible to keep silent? To what extent is he a symbol of all courageous youth, scorning the elder counsels of safety?

What does Nancy represent in the first part of the poem? Show how in the end she too finds her peace.

Discuss the character of Thorsten, and the part he plays in the unfolding of the story. Is it in keeping with the very American flavor of the poem to introduce this Norwegian strain? Why?

Thorsten's lament for Seth, beginning on page 124 "Boy, the best of men . . ." contains some of the most moving poetry in the entire book. Note also Seth's father's prayer, on page 129, "Lord, O Lord, give me the little language . . ."

What does Richman represent? Do you recognize his kinship to Orion Outlaw, in *Green Centuries*? Is he a familiar American type?

What code of the huntsman had Seth violated, which in Richman's mind justified his death?

Why does David suffer more after killing Richman than Richman had after killing Seth? "But David, giving death, was stranger to himself that mostly loved ox-laughter."

Why is Daniel at last willing to give up his idea of revenge? What part does Susan play in this renunciation? Trace Susan's influence on her family.

Note the differences in place and in time between this and *Green Centuries*. Considering these differences, what similarities do you find?

What does the poet mean by the "near gods"? Is this his way of interpreting the unconscious motives, memories, impelling influences of his characters? What rôle do they play in the poem? See his "American Mythology" in *Collected Poems*.

Observe that the events here take place on two planes, one of fact, one of psychic understanding, of deeper than surface penetration into human

motives. Show how these lines summarize the meaning of the poet's allegory:

"The ways of truth
Are wilder than we know; more terrible,
More perfect."

The author's novel, *Windless Cabins*, dealt with the same theme. It is the story of a lad who commits a crime for the sake of a girl, and then tries to conceal it. Compare the novel and the poem, and show how the theme is enriched and dignified by poetic treatment.

Additional Reading:

Windless Cabins, by Mark Van Doren.

Collected Poems, by Mark Van Doren.

MIDDLE WEST AMERICANA

Years ago, with the publication of *Main Street*, Sinclair Lewis started a fashion in fiction. So dynamic, so compelling, so apparently credible was his attack on small-town life in the Middle West that no one immediately dared say, "Come, come, Mr. Lewis, it can't all be as bad as that." Instead, innumerable lesser novels, following like leaves in the path of his whirlwind, gave such drab, dismal and depressing pictures of the Middle West that the gullible reader might have been afraid to enter any of the condemned states, from Ohio to the Rockies. We should have reflected instead that a region of great fertility, of magnificent lakes and rivers, a region settled by vigorous folk of many different cultural heritages, could scarcely have produced a way of life that was at all times bitter, void, and bleak.

Island in the Corn, by John Selby, is a well-balanced picture of Wisconsin and Minnesota in the eighties and nineties. The river towns which he describes had their snooping gossips and their cramping Puritanical standards, but they had also a rich and spacious and leisured way of living, one that we might well envy now, for it was undeterred and unshadowed by any fears of the future. There was an underlying consciousness of abundance for all, abundance both of food and of opportunity. Father Trace, robust, confident and reckless, sums up the epoch, but it is amplified and expressed in the other characters and in the vivid descriptions of all the paraphernalia of living—furniture, houses, parties, street fairs, horse-racing, and summer Chautauqua. The whole novel is as genuinely and richly American as the paintings of John Steuart Curry and Thomas Benton, also indigenous to the Middle West.

Vincent Sheean's semi-autobiographical novel of adolescence, *Bird of the Wilderness*, is another sympathetic and penetrating portrayal of life in the same much-maligned region. The background, Illinois in the critical year of the Wilson-Hughes campaign, with America on the brink of war, is more important than the story itself. Mr. Sheean writes better as an interpreter of history than as a novelist. We may regret his unnecessary lapse into melodrama at the close of the book, but be grateful for his sensitive and thoughtful analysis of German-American attitudes

in the spring of 1917. A vastly less important book than either *Personal History* or *Not Peace but a Sword*, it nevertheless claims our attention for its revelation of the author, and for its portrayal of an era confronted with the same problems as our own.

1. THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI IN THE BOOMING EIGHTIES

Island in the Corn, by John Selby

Give an introductory description of the three towns in which the story takes place: Hasselmanns, Wisconsin; Brant Rock, Minnesota; and Bridgewater, Indiana. What significant changes were taking place in these towns during the period of the novel?

Show in detail how Father Trace dominates the novel as well as his family. Does he seem to you a symbol of the United States of this period? To what other blustering fathers in recent books can you compare him?

Denny, the other dominant figure of the novel, controls others by her invalidism. Show how this is another manifestation of her father's will to have power. Is her invalidism in keeping with feminine attitudes of this period? What would be done for Denny now?

Which part of the book seems to you more interesting, the description of town and home life, the coming of electricity, river-boating, etc., or the strange marital problems of Denny and Neil? To which element does the author devote more attention?

What qualities of life in the Middle West are clearly brought out? Note especially those which seem to diverge from the accepted pattern, e.g. the family connections with the East, the Negro servants, family drinking, the lavish entertaining.

Do you think the author's picture of small town life is an authentic one? Is it also slightly nostalgic? Why?

Are the minor characters clearly individualized? What is contributed to the story by the other members of the family, such as Ann, Kitty, the servants, and the dog?

Comment on the actual localities mentioned here, such as Lake Pepin, the bluffs along the Wisconsin and Minnesota banks of the Mississippi, Chicago.

What is the meaning of the title? Does it apply to the whole book?

Additional Reading:

Sam, by John Selby. (His first novel, which won the American prize in the All-Nations Prize Competition)

Native American, by Roy Stannard Baker.

Life with Father, by Clarence Day.

The Vanishing Virginian, by Rebecca Yancey Williams.

2. YEAR OF DECISION

Bird of the Wilderness, by Vincent Sheean

Compare this novel with the first chapter of *Personal History*, "American Gothic." To what extent do you think *Bird of the Wilderness* is autobiographical? Note that the author's name establishes the fact that he is not German-American.

Does the title suggest that the author's primary intent was to write a love story, with the background of only secondary interest? Which is really of more interest here?

Describe Bill Owen's family background, his mother, his uncles, his cousins. What elements made his rebellion against his family more intense than the usual adolescent revolt?

Discuss Bill's interview with his father. What contribution to his growth did that unconventional parent make?

Trace the changing attitude of the German-Americans, and of the town toward them; discuss the private tragedies of Louisa, and of her brother Joe Busch.

Suggest some of the contributions to American life which these German families were capable of making.

Discuss Bill's friendship with Miss Carpenter. Does it seem plausible? Does she show herself in the end both wise and unselfish?

Does the episode with Ursula seem slightly preposterous and out of keeping with the rest of the book? Why?

In the social and political background, what points of similarity do you find to our own time?

What does the book add to the reader's understanding of our own country? Of the author himself?

Additional Reading:

Personal History, by Vincent Sheean.

The American Way, by George Kaufman and Moss Hart. (This play is an excellent picture of a German-American family in the same critical era.)

JOURNEY TO THE ANTIPODES

When we travel, regions that were once dull blurs on a half-remembered map become filled in with the precise colors of experience. One of the pleasures of increasing years is this game of filling in with more and more knowledge that outline map of the world with which we started, and which in childhood was sketched with only the colors of home. For most of us this enriched familiarity with our world can more readily be acquired by reading than by actual travel. The two books to be studied in this program will take us a long way from home, and if thoughtfully read will paint in vividly one of the least familiar sections of the world map, Australia. It is a land that has in its history much in common with our own; both of these novels suggest that similarity, both in background and in present day problems.

The Timeless Land, by Eleanor Dark, will appeal rather to those who enjoy history than to those who must have at all costs a romantic story to spice their dose of fact. Based on very thorough research into the records of the founding of Australia, such as letters, journals, reports, it is written with a certain grave austerity. The author has been completely unwilling to invent the inevitable beautiful heroine to act out her romance against a background which must in all truth have been a very grim one. She balances with a nice sort of counterpoint the parallel themes of the natives who were happy and well-adjusted to their forest home, and of the new settlers who were lost and wretched in an unfamiliar and unkind environment. These pitiable convicts whom the Empire Builders of the Eighteenth Century tossed out to establish a new dominion were not upheld by the faith which inspired our own early colonists, and their survival against odds is a miracle of endurance.

The Battlers, by Kylie Tennant, takes up the story of these dispossessed of Australia nearly two centuries later. It is a thoughtful novel, written with compassion and understanding, and a deep sense of human dignity. Its characters are the "little people," uprooted and disinherited, but they are never presented as depraved or lost; the author believes in human character, and in the fundamental decencies. Her little ragged caravan of

"battlers," fruit pickers and vagabonds, are each possessed by a dream of settling down, of home and security. They move aimlessly across a cruel land not yet fully tamed to human uses in the long years of its settlement, but still full of the wild beauty of mountains, and the gaudy colors of unknown flowers.

Together, the two novels suggest a not very happy commentary on man's inability to make the fullest use of his environment. To balance this suggestion, we need to remember the present-day development of Australia; neither the convicts of *The Timeless Land* nor the seasonal workers of *The Battlers* are fully representative of that prosperous and progressive Dominion.

1. THE FIRST SETTLERS "DOWN UNDER"

The Timeless Land, by Eleanor Dark

Read what the author says in her preface about her reconstruction of native life. Do you think she has succeeded in creating this strange primitive life and making it credible? How did Bennilong and his people live?

What impression of the land itself do you gain from reading this? How did it seem to the natives? To the new settlers? How do you account for the difference?

Discuss the conditions under which the convicts were sent out to Australia. Were they in any way comparable to the way in which slaves were brought to this country? What basic needs of new settlers were lacking? Does this treatment of convicts seem to you typical of the eighteenth century?

Show how each of the two leading characters, Bennilong and Governor Philip, is representative of his own people, and is contrasted with the other.

Discuss the author's balancing and contrasting main themes: human life adjusted to nature, and human life terrified and lost in nature.

What do you consider were the elements which made this colony survive, in spite of such terrific odds? What part in this survival did Governor Philip play?

Andrew's escape from the settlement and establishment of himself in the wilderness points to a hope for the future. Discuss his achievement and its significance for the colony. Is this achievement obliterated by his death?

Mannion's establishment of a farm points to a different sort of future. Which do you think is more important in present-day Australia?

Does the author use quotations from source materials too copiously? Could the book be shortened advantageously, or do you think this abundance of detail is necessary in reconstructing her background?

If you have an opportunity, compare this with Charles Nordhoff's *Botany Bay*, which appeared serially in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He uses the same material, but interpolates a romantic adventure story.

Compare *The Timeless Land* with some novel of the early days of our own country, such as Caroline Gordon's *Green Centuries*.

Additional Reading:

Botany Bay, by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall.

2. THE DISPOSSESSED

The Battlers, by Kylie Tennant

Locke suggested as the inalienable rights of man "life, liberty, and the ownership of property." Jefferson later changed this to "the pursuit of happiness." Show how they are interdependent. Can you illustrate this from *The Battlers*? Notice that all the characters are landless, in a very large and sparsely settled country.

Why is it impossible for these people to settle down? Have they been betrayed by society, or have they betrayed and defeated themselves?

What does Snow represent in the scheme of this novel? Do you recognize any kinship between him and Andrew, in *The Timeless Land*? Comment on the significance of his nightmare of barbed wire.

Illustrate the author's belief in human character, in essential human decency, by reference to such characters as the Stray, Miss Phipps, the Postlethwaites.

Which of the characters in this novel seem to you interesting, appealing, clearly individualized? Comment on the author's humor.

The discussion between the Postlethwaites in regard to the future of their children is suggestive: "And how about their minds? You'll take them back and bury them under the ruins . . . Books, business, and banks . . . Stale ruins of other men's lives . . . all the things that make life easier and thinking harder." Do you think the "battlers" escape these ruins?

The publishers suggest a comparison with John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Do you find that this comparison can be carried beyond the superficial fact that they both are stories of seasonal workers? Compare the two books in regard to creation of character, emotional drive, sense of drama and of climax, understanding of human beings and of human situations.

What comments on the establishment and development of a democracy are suggested to you by reading these two books together? Can you find implicit here any answer to the question: Why should Australia still have so many disinherited wanderers so long after its foundation?

Additional Reading:

The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck.
Australia Advances, by David M. Dow.

THE RIDDLE OF FRANCE

When the Germans marched into Paris in the early summer of 1940 they conquered a great deal more than actual geographical territory. They took over, changed, and temporarily at least annihilated the second homeland of civilized and cultured people all over the world. The extent of that loss cannot yet be fully measured; we are still too stunned, and too occupied with material change to be able to estimate the less tangible but infinitely more far-reaching spiritual changes and damages. We must accept, however, that the poplar-bordered roads of France, the little cafés, the chateaux and cathedrals, are closed to us, removed from the possibility of our actual return, though happily not removed from memory.

Many books are yet to be written to explain France's terrifying collapse; many have already appeared. To those which are clamorously journalistic it is perhaps wise for the contemplative reader to turn a deaf ear, just as we need to turn off the radio to avoid a confusion of news. We are too close to this tragedy of France to understand completely its intricate causes; it is a major historical disaster which both historians and philosophers will mull over for years to come. But we cannot fail to read with interest interpretations of that disaster from the hands of thoughtful contemporary writers.

Hans Habe was a successful novelist in his adopted land, Austria, before that country was absorbed by Germany. He joined the French Foreign Legion, fought as long as fighting was possible, escaped from a German prison camp, and has given us the record of his experience in *A Thousand Shall Fall*. One of the most penetrating war books yet to appear, it illustrates the great difference between mere reporting and interpretation by an artist who writes with understanding, compassion, and insight.

Storm Jameson, like many other writers, has always had a great love for France. Her novel of two years ago, *Cousin Honoré*, was a sympathetic portrayal of the complex strands of Alsatian life which could only have been written by one who knows the region intimately. This year, in *The Fort*, she attempts her own analysis of why that beloved country crumbled before

Germany. This short novel, cast in the form of a dialogue, is an interesting corollary to the much fuller and longer *A Thousand Shall Fall*. The two writers, one Hungarian and one English, see France from very different angles, but they both view her tragedy with sorrow and with unsatisfied questioning.

1. ONE MAN'S INTERPRETATION

A Thousand Shall Fall, by Hans Habe

Why did Habe volunteer in the French army? Does the fact that he is a foreigner help him to write about France with greater objectivity than a native Frenchman could?

The book may be discussed under three major heads: War, Captivity, and Escape. Sketch briefly the events of each.

Illustrate the author's ability to present sharply a vivid vignette: e.g., the baby carriage struck by the first bomb, the women exiled from Lorraine, the looting of the champagne train.

In the first part of the book, what causes of French defeat are suggested? Of German victory? How does this check with Shirer's account in *Berlin Diary*?

Discuss the statement: "War is an immoral business, and it is absurd to set up moral principles within the framework of its immorality."

What part did unrestricted plunder play in the warlike spirit of the Germans?

Compare the account of his escape with that in some other books you have read. (Some are suggested below.) Tell the story of Mère Amalie and her crystal rosary.

Trace the theme of "the blue Christ of Noirval" through the three movements of the book. Give other instances of the author's religious feeling and deep poetic insight.

What qualities differentiate this first hand account of war from more journalistic reports?

What is the author's hope for the future? Does he believe in human character and the possibility of human progress?

Do you think he would agree with J. B. Priestley's plan for the future, as set down in *Out of the People*?

Additional Reading:

Berlin Diary, by W. L. Shirer.

Escape, by Ethel Vance.

Out of the Night, by Jan Valtin.

2. 1918-1941

The Fort, by Storm Jameson

Observe the form of this short novel. Is this a very new, or a very old way of setting forth ideas? Illustrate your answer. Is it effectively used here?

What is the setting? How is the background of the war of 1914-1918 suggested in the history of the house?

What similarities do you find here to the account of the fall of France in the first part of *A Thousand Shall Fall*? Does the author suggest any different causes?

Describe the personalities of each of the five men who appear here. What differences in English, French, and German character, attitudes, loyalties, do they illustrate? Do you find that they are clearly individualized?

What section of English opinion does Major Ward represent?

How is the attitude of the young men of France, those who have grown up since 1918, brought out in the conversation between Masson and Vidal, beginning on page 21?

Discuss the conversation between Langer and Murray; what facts about German youth are brought out here? Note that he is of the same generation as Masson and Vidal.

What causes Ward and Murray to decide to stay? Is their attitude typically British?

What does the ending mean? Can you compare it with the ending of *Journey's End*, a play very similar in setting and in mood?

Additional Reading:

Journey's End, by R. C. Sherriff.

Cousin Honoré, by Storm Jameson.

CONQUISTADORS AND INDIANS

Interest in South America, one of the current trends in publishing, is no new thing in United States literature. Prescott established the tradition more than a century ago, describing from the remoteness of his Boston library the pageantry, the cruelty, and the courage of Spanish conquest with such vividness that it is hard to believe he had never seen either Spain or South America. His histories are classics, but they by no means exhausted the subject. Much material yet remains to be examined in the heaped-up archives of Spain and the new world. As Van Wyck Brooks has pointed out, Prescott's histories are written objectively, without philosophical interpretation. Much more thought and insight could be applied to the drama of that tragic conflict between sixteenth century Spain and the alien civilization of Incas and Aztecs.

Such historical interpretation is to be found in Andrew Lytle's thoughtful novel, *At the Moon's Inn*, whose major character is Hernando de Soto. The novel begins with a firmly outlined picture of sixteenth century Spain, a picture that reveals inner attitudes and loyalties as well as outward aspects of a country which was at that time extravagantly rich and bitterly poor, passionately prejudiced and passionately religious, and dominated by a dream of world power. The gold from Peru which still gilds the *retablos* of Spanish cathedrals was pouring into the country, and it was gold which enticed de Soto on his disastrous and futile journey to Florida.

Broad and Alien Is the World, by Ciro Alegría, might be called "Heirs and Assigns of the Conquest." Here are manifest the same blind undaunted courage, the same hard-bitten avarice, which forced de Soto's steel-armored, starving troops through the hot swamps of Florida. Here too is the same unresolved conflict between Spaniards and Indians. The author writes with warm sympathy of the life of a Peruvian village; his penetrating and at times poetic portrayal of the struggle for survival of the village is bound to broaden the reader's understanding. Such a book, narrow in scope but intense, does more to increase our knowledge of South American problems, traditions, ideals, than a dozen glib travel books describing the continent from the

point of view of a luxury transport plane. We shall hope for more such authentic descriptions of the life of other South American countries.

1. THE QUEST FOR GOLD

At the Moon's Inn, by Andrew Lytle

How does the author describe the background of sixteenth century Spain? Who was ruler in Spain when de Soto sailed for Florida? What revealing incidents help him to establish this mood? Do you think he spends too much time on this background?

What is the significance of the appearance of Cabeza de Vaca at the feast? Who was Cabeza de Vaca?

What sort of person is Nuño Tovar? Is he representative of his age? In what way is he a contrast to de Soto?

Show how the author brings in the story of the conquest of Peru through the memories of Tovar. Why does he wish to remind his readers of this earlier conquest? What relation has it to the Florida expedition?

With the exception of Tovar and de Soto, do you think the other people of the novel are sharply characterized? Do they stand out in your memory?

What were de Soto's motives? Why was he finally forced to break with his religion? Was this a peculiarly tragic situation for a Spaniard of his day and time? Why does the author emphasize the religious element?

Discuss the author's treatment of the Indians. How does it compare with Caroline Gordon's in *Green Centuries*? Notice that Lytle maintains the same point of view throughout; the expedition is always seen through the eyes of the invaders, not of the invaded.

Observe the dramatic episodes which stud the book; e.g. Ortiz's first Mass upon his return to the Spaniards, the priest's denunciation of de Soto. Do you think the author succeeds better with such episodes than with the creation of character?

Andrew Lytle has attempted an ambitious task here; in what measure do you think he has succeeded?

Additional Reading:

Hilton Head, by Josephine Pinckney. (The part about the Spanish settlement of St. Augustine)

Hernan Cortes, Conqueror of Mexico, by Salvador de Madariaga. (A superb study of the Spanish conquistador)

2. "LIFE AND DEATH OF A PERUVIAN VILLAGE"

Broad and Alien Is the World, by Ciro Alegria

Describe the village of Rumi as it was when the story begins in 1912. Why are these Indians called community Indians? Discuss their methods of sharing work and harvests.

What ancient customs and rituals are brought out here? Note especially the corn-husking, wheat-thrashing, the round-up of cattle.

What characteristics of the villagers are brought out? Comment on their love of music, and the place that it holds in their community life.

How does the author describe the use of stamped paper in Peru? Amplify his statement, "There might be no bread, but there was always stamped paper. It was the national ill. . ."

What is the main theme of this novel? How does it give the book unity? What two characters exemplify the opposing forces of the drama?

Comment on the connecting thread of the colorful character of the bandit, Fiero Vasquez.

Do you think the book is too episodic in character? Would it gain by being shortened?

Does the author make his Indians too good and his Spaniards too bad? Are there any good Spaniards in the novel?

What weaknesses of Spanish colonization are brought out here? Illustrate.

Show how this book illustrates such sociological terms as agrarianism, absentee ownership, community farming, etc. What do you learn about Latin America from this novel?

How does the return of Benito Castro round off the story of the village? Discuss the author's statement that "this sense of life adjusted to the creative rhythm of the earth is ineradicable in South America."

Additional Reading:

Fire on the Andes, by Carleton Beals. (Good descriptions of Peru)

THE GODS OF SPECIAL PLACES

Small wonder that the ancients acknowledged the presence of the lesser gods in certain spots of earth, the local deities of wood and stream and mountain height. For everyone who has spent much time out-of-doors there must always remain certain places which not only have an especial beauty, but also an especial significance, an intimate response, a gift of inner peace for the individual. That is to say, there sometimes exists between place and human being the same inexplicable attraction that creates friendships. Few, having found such a place, are so fortunate as to be able to build a home within it; that is what the impulsive Peter wanted to do on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he found it good to be there. Most of us, like Peter, can revisit our places of special illumination only in memory.

In *Windswept* Mary Ellen Chase has told the story of such a place, of the home that was built there, and of its influence in shaping the destinies of its human occupants. The headland on the northern coast of Maine, where the first Philip Marston felt that he belonged even before his house was built, is as clearly a protagonist of the novel as Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*. Indeed, there is a chance that the grandeur and austerity of the setting which Miss Chase describes so beautifully tend to dwarf the human beings who inhabit it. But even so, she has led us to a place where it is good to be, and made us realize that the experience of living with beauty has a definite curative quality. *Windswept* is a novel of spiritual affirmation, bracing as the Maine air among so many novels of doubt and negation.

Wine of the Country, by Hamilton Basso, deals also with the dominant influence of a locality upon those whose lives are strongly rooted there. Attachment to a place is as characteristic of the South as it is of New England, though perhaps it is more often to a house than to a landscape. In Miss Chase's novel the peninsula, the headland, surrounded by open sky and sea, are at all times more important than the house itself. In *Wine of the Country* the influence which spins the destiny of Ellen and of Ravenwill is that of a way of life rather than of a place, but it is a way of life conditioned by generations of adaptation to natural surroundings. Some readers may object that for his contrast of

two distinct regions Mr. Basso has not chosen a truly representative section of the South, but he was obviously interested in the very local and atypical characteristics of that region, and in the reaction to them of a sensitive personality whose roots were elsewhere. Both novels are akin in their feeling for the earth, for a simple and permanent way of life.

1. "AN OLD AND WISE LAND"

Windswept, by Mary Ellen Chase

What purpose is served by the prologue?

What sort of place is the headland where *Windswept* stood, and which plays a major rôle in the novel? Was it a place of facile and immediately recognizable beauty? To what sort of characters would such a place appeal?

What qualities in the place appealed especially to Philip Marston? to his son John? to Jan?

"Whatever dramas were enacted here upon this stage, against these settings . . . should by right call forth in those who played their parts only constancy and honour." Do you think this is true of the Marstons and their friends? Do the characters measure up to the nobility of the setting?

Note that Jan and Anton are introduced very early in the novel. Why are they brought in? What is the author saying to us through these two representatives of a foreign culture, and later through Radegund and Adrienne? Do these characters spoil the essentially American flavour of *Windswept*?

Is the author's focus as clear for her main characters as for such minor ones as Mrs. Haskell, Caleb Perkins, Philomena? Does Mrs. Haskell remind you of certain people in the author's other novels of Maine?

Discuss the relation of Jan to the story of the Marstons. What are the sources of his spiritual strength?

Jan's winters alone at *Windswept* are like that one so well described in Elizabeth Coatsworth's novel of Maine, *Here I Stay*. Compare them if possible.

In what sense is this a novel of affirmation? Would Van Wyck Brooks consider Mary Ellen Chase a positive or a negative writer? (See *The Opinions of Oliver Allston*.)

How is the quotation from Sir Thomas Browne, "Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us," applicable to this novel?

Additional Reading:

Here I Stay, by Elizabeth Coatsworth.

Mary Peters, by Mary Ellen Chase.

Silas Crockett, by Mary Ellen Chase.

2. CONTRASTED REGIONS

Wine of the Country, by Hamilton Basso

What impression of a New England college town do you gain from the first part of this novel? Is it sympathetically presented as a good way of life?

Few novelists have succeeded in describing credibly either college professors or college life. Do you think *Wine of the Country* is an exception to this statement?

Is Ravenwill made to seem genuinely devoted to the study of anthropology? What relation does his research have to the rest of the book? Did he apply his knowledge to the conduct of his own life?

Does the author succeed in making both Catherine and Ellen attractive?

Does he exaggerate in his description of Ravenwill's South Carolina home? Which do you think the author knows and understands better, New England or South Carolina? Have you ever known people like the Ravenwills and their neighbors?

The story of Ned and his feud with the big deer could stand alone as a memorable short story. Notice Ned's spiritual kinship with Orion Outlaw of *Green Centuries*, and with Richman, of *The Mayfield Deer*. He too is in the "American grain."

Trace the gradual steps which lead to Ellen's tragedy. Does the author prepare the way for it? Observe the effect on Ellen of the dove shoot, the cock fight. These two episodes are excellent bits of *genre* painting, complete in themselves, as well as integrated in the novel.

Was Ravenwill stupid and cruel in keeping Ellen in the South? How might a different type of personality from hers have reacted to this environment? Do you think Catherine would be more adaptable?

Why does Ravenwill decide to remain in the South? Is he thereby accepting defeat?

Does the author bring out certain intrinsic and significant differences in northern and southern attitudes? What are they?

Additional Reading:

Days before Lent, by Hamilton Basso.

"AURAS OF DELIGHT"

Many of the books used in this course are by well-established writers who have already won prestige, and upon the quality of whose performance we can to a certain degree rely. One of the pleasures of both reading and reviewing is, however, to discover those quiet and unobtrusive books which slip onto the shelves without any ballyhoo of advertising or book club selection, but which often reward the reader with an unusual point of view, or a rare understanding of everyday experience. Both *Land of Spices* and *The Days Grow Cold* are such shy books, easy to miss in a noisy crowd, but capable of calling forth such subtle responses and suggestions as are seldom aroused by more sensational novels.

Both of these novels deal with the acute perceptions of sensitive youth; the almost extra-sensory awareness of the child lost in an adult world, surrounded still by "auras of delight," but catching implications and echoes that bewilder and sometimes hurt.

The Land of Spices tells the story of a young girl who suffers a severe psychological shock, but is able to integrate it into her personality, and to derive from it strength rather than damage. Essentially a novel of character, it is also a sympathetic portrayal of the mystic way of life; the convent school is presented with humor as well as understanding, and the religious feeling is beautifully convincing. The idea of withdrawing from the world appeals at some time or other to most human beings; how this withdrawal is achieved is a private and individual matter, but the experience has universality.

In *The Days Grow Cold* we see a small town in the deep South through the eyes of a lonely child; but do not be deceived by this apparently simple pattern. A surprising number of barbed and poignant comments on the present day South are packed into Lucinda's engaging little story. Miss Anderson's method is the reverse of Erskine Caldwell's, and fundamentally much more southern, for she conceals criticism of existing conditions behind a suave manner and a gaze of wide-eyed innocence. Her main theme is a very important one which has seldom been given its due emphasis: the costly and at times ridiculous sacrifices made to maintain the anachronistic splendour of old places in the South.

1. ONE VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The Land of Spices, by Kate O'Brien

Show how two backgrounds are contrasted here, Brussels and Ireland. What do you learn about each?

Describe the special factors which made Helen Archer's youth unusual. What sort of a person was she before she became a nun?

Do you find the episode which was the final factor in her decision too violent, too jarring, in an otherwise quiet book? Would a person of her intelligence and delicate sensibilities have remained in complete ignorance of the nature of her father's aberration?

Does her character show growth and development after she becomes a nun, or is it stultified by her retirement from the world? What forces operate to keep these nuns alive and in touch with things?

Discuss her relationship with the other nuns; with the pupils. Why does one pupil more than the others appeal to her? Note the admirable restraint with which this relationship is handled.

What qualities in Irish life and thought were repugnant to the Mother Superior? Was she always a little homesick for Brussels?

Does the author show an understanding of adolescent girls? Illustrate.

Although Helen Archer's experience is in many ways a rather special one, it has certain elements of universal appeal. What are they?

What is the source of the title, and its meaning?

In reviewing this book, the *New Statesman and Nation* said it is "adult without being about politics, serious without being about the war, emotional without being about marriage, religious without being didactic." Do you agree?

Additional Reading:

The Convent, by Alyse Simpson.

The Keys of the Kingdom, by A. J. Cronin. (The religious life from a priest's point of view)

Black Narcissus, by Rumer Godden.

2. DOMINATED BY A DREAM

The Days Grow Cold, by Barbara Tunnell Anderson

In what section of the South is Macklin? What details help you to locate it?

What part in Lucinda's life is played by Mittie? by Cajy? Do these Negroes seem real? Are they presented patronizingly? Sympathetically?

What effect does Castleton and its story have upon Lucinda? Upon the town?

Is there any symbolism in the great painting of the Cass ancestors? What does this portrait represent? Is the attitude of the Casses typical of the South?

What admirable qualities do you find in this loyalty to the past? What damaging qualities?

Through Lucinda's experiences, what do you learn about living conditions among the Negroes? Are these conditions exaggerated?

What are the author's hopes for art and music in the South? Have any steps already been taken toward such development of local talent? In your particular region, what?

Does the gentleness of this book keep it from having real force and impact? This is a first novel; what may we expect from its author in the future?

Additional Reading:

Curtain of Green, by Eudora Welty.

Pale Horse, Pale Rider, by Katherine Anne Porter.

YEARS OF TRANSITION

Much as the reader may wish that top flight novelists would continue to take us on liberating adventures beyond this present world, the fact remains that few writers of acute perceptions and understanding hearts can remove themselves from the current scene. The dulling, blunting, or at best changing of creative effort is one of the minor by-products of war, most difficult to measure and perhaps most far-reaching in effect. Here, grouped together, three of the ablest English novelists of this generation respond to disaster and record, with the delicate seismographs of gifted imaginations, the omens of change. England, they agree, cannot be the same again; the first book to be studied here is an elegy for the past, the second an imprint of the present, the third a plan for the future.

In *Between the Acts* Virginia Woolf writes, as she often has, in the mood of poetry rather than of prose. She views England somewhat as one may see in memory a well-loved landscape overlaid with a delicate palimpsest of the colors of different seasons. It is possible to remember a familiar scene colored by autumn and washed over with the white of winter. Thus Virginia Woolf, writing her last book with a sense of doom already upon her, looks back at England glimmering through a haze of various times, eras, and national moods. *Between the Acts* is not one of her more important works, but in a season of arid and factual chronicles we recognize in it the authentic and unmistakable luster of poetic imagination.

Charles Morgan in *The Empty Room* is concerned with the impact upon individuals of a changing world. In the intense personal crisis of a group of high-minded individuals he has sought a parable for our times, an expression of his belief in the indestructibility of love and goodness as the "continuing inheritance of humanity."

Here we have Virginia Woolf remembering England in terms of nostalgic poetry, Charles Morgan relating her problems to his own basic philosophy; while in *Out of the People* J. B. Priestley plans a future for England with the specific clarity of an engineer's blueprints. There is a tonic quality in such vigorous reaction to change. Mr. Priestley's plans for England contain many stimulating suggestions applicable to the United States.

1. A BACKWARD GLANCE

Between the Acts, by Virginia Woolf

Note that the characters here are presented on several different levels, those of memory and of subconscious motives and desires, as well as of outward action.

What relation do the tags of poetry which float through Isa's mind bear to the story as a whole? What do they reveal about her own thinking?

What does the title mean? Does it suggest not only the village pageant, but the curtain rising on a larger tragedy?

Do you find a similarity of theme here to that in *The Empty Room*? Virginia Woolf believes in "the continuing land," as Morgan believes in "the continuing people." What qualities in England do they think are indestructible?

Discuss the statement: "Three emotions made the ply of human life: Love, Hate, Peace."

What does the author mean by saying: "Mrs. Swithin belonged to the unifiers; Bartholomew to the separatists"?

Do the plays within the pageant have the flavour of the centuries they represent? Aside from that, what meaning have they? Why is the nineteenth century represented by a policeman?

What does Mrs. Swithin mean by "You've stirred in me my unacted part"? In what sense does this apply to vital experiences in reading, as well as to seeing plays?

Why is the present symbolized by mirrors? How does this suggest "the whole population of the mind's profundity"?

Comment on the extraordinarily percipient quality of Miss Woolf's prose, as in her description of a child looking at a flower, or in the paragraph beginning "There had always been lilies there, self-sown from wind-dropped seed."

Additional Reading:

Orlando, by Virginia Woolf.

The Years, by Virginia Woolf. (These two are suggested out of her other works, because they are written in a similar mood)

2. "THESE DISILLUSIONS ARE HIS CURIOUS PROVING"

The Empty Room, by Charles Morgan

What is the symbolism of the title?

If you have read *The Fountain*, you will see that Carey has that inner quietness which was the theme of the earlier novel. What is its source in her? How is it threatened?

Read the three stanzas from Edmund Blunden's "Report on Experience" which head the three parts of the novel, and relate them to the story.

Discuss: "... the deep reserves of Victorian prosperity had held together the wreck of the old world . . . now for good or evil that was gone.

... there would be no going back." Does he agree with Priestley on that?

Comment on the quotations from *John Inglesant*. This is an historical novel of England in the sixteenth century; it was very popular in the eighties and nineties, and is still available. Evidently it has influenced Charles Morgan's thinking.

What do Cannock and Rydal mean by the term "afforestation"? by "nothing new and enduring comes except out of the old by unbroken inheritance"?

Read Drake's prayer, quoted on page 55, and relate it to the present.

Rydal says "We have begun to think more and more in terms of an everlasting and all-inclusive State, less and less in terms of the Continuing People for whom the state is nothing more and should be nothing more than manager and trustee." Keep this in mind when you have discussed Priestley's *Out of the People*, and compare it with his ideas.

How do you think this very short novel compares with Charles Morgan's longer ones? Do you think he gains or loses by compression?

Additional reading:

The Fountain, by Charles Morgan.

John Inglesant, by Joseph Henry Shorthouse.

3. BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Out of the People, by J. B. Priestley

What distinction does Priestley make between "people" and "masses"? "In all crises we tend to be just people." Show how Nazism is a government of the masses, not of the people.

Why does he consider England a plutocracy, rather than a genuine aristocracy? Upon what are class distinctions based?

What does he mean by the new sense of interdependence, the awareness of others, to which we must not become hardened? How may this be used as a compass to steer by?

What does he think of Alice Duer Miller's poem *The White Cliffs*? What section of English life does this represent?

Why does Priestley feel it important to change ideas and mental attitudes before going ahead with active social planning? How does he account for the failure of the League of Nations?

How does he answer the question: What is Britain? What test does he apply to good governmental policy? In what is it similar to good housekeeping?

Discuss separately the three obstacles to Democracy which Priestley mentions. Are they applicable to this country as well as to England?

In the appendix you will find more specific plans for "What Can I Do Now"? Discuss this plan in detail, applying it to the United States at the present time.

Additional reading:

Where Do We Go from Here? by Harold Laski.

CHAPTER X

MEN AGAINST WEATHER

“When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy hands, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?”

There are few more restful escapes from the impact of daily living than to lie flat on one's back in a boat, preferably a small boat, and watch the whole drift and sweep of the night sky above a quiet lake. Immediate concerns and trivialities drop away in the presence of immensity. Such an awareness of personal unimportance in the cosmic scheme awaits the reader of George Stewart's *Storm*. In spite of the somewhat ominous title, the effect of reading the book is at once quieting and releasing. In one sense *Storm* is a very modern sort of novel, since its material and its methods are scientific, precise, up-to-date; but in a much deeper sense it is as ancient in feeling as the nature poetry of the Psalms, or of that unknown writer who sang “O ye winds of God, O ye Light and Darkness, O ye Lightnings and Clouds. . . .” This drama of humanity against the forces of nature is permeated with a strong feeling for the interdependence of modern man: the light touch of a drifting owl's wing in the Sierras disrupts communication between far-off cities; a parable to remind us that we are never separate, an important reminder as we look beyond war to a hope of greater unity.

In *Ocean* James Hanley focuses the ancient drama of man against the elements in an experience all too common in the modern world. What is it like to be adrift in mid-ocean in an open boat? What does such an experience do to personality? What sort of characters survive best? This brief and intense novel by a young Irishman suggests the mood of one of our American classics, *Moby Dick*: man's inadequacy and stubborn puny courage matched against the vastness of the sea. It has a certain timeless quality, in spite of the modernity of the experience.

1. "SNOW AND VAPORS AND STORMY WIND"

Storm, by George Stewart

What sort of preparation do you think the author had to make for this very unusual novel? See "An Interview with George Stewart" in the *New York Times Book Review*, Dec. 14, 1941, in which the author describes his technique. An abstract of this would be a good way to begin a discussion of the novel.

Do you think he has been successful in assimilating his material, and weaving it into a story?

Does he succeed in arousing your interest in the storm itself? How does he create suspense?

Does he create interest also in the human beings whose lives are involved in the storm? Do you think the magnitude of his theme tends to dwarf human personalities, as we suggested in the case of Mary Ellen Chase's novel *Windswept*?

Trace the different threads of human stories which are interwoven in the pattern of the storm. Which of them seem to you most interesting?

What rôles in the drama are played by an owl, a boar, and a coyote?

Discuss the various ways in which human character is revealed by the test of the storm: the business men who try to bully the general into opening the flood gates, or the motorists on the snowy highway, waiting for someone else to do something about it.

Can you trace the source of the quotation "Fire and hail . . . snow and vapours, stormy wind fulfilling his word"? By whom is it quoted in the novel, and in what connection?

Summarize the three cosmic results of the storm, as given on page 331-2.

Note the author's references to the story of Donner Pass, a story told in an earlier book of his.

How does this novel bring out the need for world-wide cooperation? Can you compare the ideas expressed here with similar ones in J. B. Priestley's *Out of the People*?

Additional Reading:

Ordeal by Hunger, by George Stewart. (Donner Expedition)

2. THE ESTRANGING SEA

Ocean, by James Hanley

Characterize each of the five men adrift in the boat. What do you learn of the past life of each one? Does the author succeed in telling you much in few words?

What is the significance of Renton's boyhood dream? his fears?

What characteristics in each of these men account for his ability or lack of it to meet strain? Show how each man reacts to disaster.

What are the inner sources of Curtain's strength? of Father Michael's? Show how they are contrasted throughout. What experiences have they both had which the others lack?

In what sense is this a novel of place, as *Windswept* is? What is the dominant force in the book? Does it give you a sense of defeat?

How is the whale described? Why does the sight of it please the men? Is it a symbol of malignant power here, as the white whale is in *Moby Dick*? If you are familiar with that much longer novel, compare the two.

What do you think the ending means? Translate the priest's vision at the end. Does the rock suggest "the Rock of Ages"?

Discuss the religious element implicit in this book. Do you think the author believes in human character?

Comment on the compressed force of this short novel, and compare it with others of the same *genre* used in this course.

CHAPTER XI

A POET AND A CRITIC LOOK AT LIFE

How much of his personal life is legitimate material for a writer? How much must he be controlled by the censor of "good taste"? Asheville banned from its libraries the books of Thomas Wolfe because he wrote too intimately of his family, friends, and early life; or was it because he wrote with apparent disparagement? Yet great writers of all times have described their own inmost experiences, sometimes disguised, sometimes openly and frankly revealed, as Goethe did in *The Sorrows of Werther*, or Rousseau in his *Confessions*. "A writer, like everybody else, must use what he has to use," said Thomas Wolfe. An intense interest always attaches to any revelation of a human life, an interest enormously increased if the revelation is dignified by beauty of language and thought. For the sake of this interest most readers are willing to waive any question of taste.

From the point of view of personal revelation few books could be more sharply contrasted than William Rose Benét's *The Dust Which Is God*, and Van Wyck Brooks's *The Opinions of Oliver Allston*. The first is frank, intimate, personal autobiography, the second as shy, oblique, and impersonal as the opinions expressed in it are vigorous and forthright. Mr. Brooks permits us only fleeting glimpses of himself, while he tells us a great deal about his political and literary beliefs; Mr. Benét admits the reader to his inner life, but veils it in the exaltation and enchantment of poetry.

The Dust Which Is God, in spite of its poetic form, may be read as rapidly as a novel, for the narrative has definite pace and emotional drive. This pace is broken at intervals by lyrics which express the mood of that particular moment or occasion; these are so beautifully expressive that most readers will want to return to savour them at leisure, after the story has been carried to its conclusion. This unique autobiography in verse is a genuine treasure trove for the thoughtful reader; it includes, interwoven in the life of the author, a rapid survey of the past fifty years of American life, unforgettable, sensitively etched portraits of some of the leading literary figures of our times, the subtle record of a poet growing to maturity, and a group of lyrics that have the magic of real poetry. Every one who has an interest in con-

temporary American literature will want to read *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* for its stimulating statement of our national literary tradition, and *The Dust Which Is God* for its often beautiful and always interesting revelation of personal experience.

1. THE AMERICAN LITERARY TRADITION

The Opinions of Oliver Allston, by Van Wyck Brooks

What are Mr. Brooks's other works? In what way do they qualify him especially for writing this?

What is the framework which he has chosen to give distance and impersonality to his opinions? Does this oblique method of presentation render them less forceful?

Can you name other writers who have presented their thoughts thus, in short pungent sentences?

What do you learn here of Allston's—or Brooks's—personal character, tastes, habits?

Cite some evidences of his wide reading and studies.

What are his political beliefs? What application does he give to the phrase "in the American grain"?

Upon what reasons does he found his belief in American idealism?

Observe that the second half of the book is devoted entirely to his literary creed; does he write with more conviction here? What connection does he feel exists between literature and government?

What are his tests for greatness in literature? What does he mean by the phrases "death-drive" and "life-drive"? "Positive and negative" writers?

Why does he feel that most contemporary writers express the "death-drive"? that "the literary mind of our time is sick"?

What does he consider are the great themes of literature? Do you agree? Would you add to his list?

Discuss his opinion of Gertrude Stein; Joyce; Hemingway; Ezra Pound. Who are his literary idols?

How might these opinions be used as a touchstone, or yardstick for judging and selecting recent books?

Additional Reading:

The Summing Up, by Somerset Maugham. (A similar statement of a writer's literary creed)

2. A POET GROWS TO MATURITY

The Dust Which Is God, by William Rose Benét

Here, as in the case of *The Mayfield Deer*, the reviewer is advised to read the poem through twice.

Notice the three separate strands of this book. It may be discussed under these headings:

The poet's own life—his parents, background, education, travel, marriage, friends.

The past fifty years in American life. Note that he does the same sort of thing that Dos Passos did in *U. S. A.* Read aloud some of these sections. Comment on Mr. Benét's use of satire.

The interspersed sections of pure poetry. Show the relation of these to the narrative, and read aloud some which you like: e.g., on page 41 the lines beginning "beautiful are thy works and ways, O god of the young," or on p. 279 "This kind is beautiful."

Christopher Morley insists that only "the second-rate tourist in print" will want to know who these characters are in real life. But most readers will be willing to accept his opprobrium for the interest involved. Mr. Morley himself is here, as well as Stephen Vincent Benét, Elinor Wylie, Kathleen Norris. Can you recognize them and others?

Why does Mr. Morley think that William Wordsworth would be the perfect reader for this story of spiritual adventure? What does he mean by "Mr. Benét has known, has considered, has conveyed"?

The section which deals with Elinor Wylie (Sylvia Chantrey) has some of the most beautiful poetry of the whole autobiography. Compare it with her description of the same experience in her collected poems. Not since the Brownings have two poets left such a complete record of their love.

What advantage is gained by spacing the blank verse as it is here? Do you find that it makes it easier or harder to read?

Do you think that Mr. Benét has revealed himself too frankly? Could this story have been as effectively told in prose? What is the advantage of telling it in poetry?

Additional Reading:

Collected Poems, by Elinor Wylie.

"My Brother Steve," by William Rose Benét, *Saturday Review of Literature*, Nov. 15, 1941.

CHAPTER XII

"THE CONTINUING PEOPLE"

"Rise above a ruined world
With a more than mortal fire."

—RIDGELY TORRENCE

In *Out of the People*, J. B. Priestley suggests that the hope of the future rests with the people themselves; not with arms or production of machines, not with government or leaders, but with the courage, the strength to endure and to rebuild, of the little people in every nation everywhere. If this is true, its corollary must also be accepted, that the hope of the future rests upon individual character; that no plan for a better world can become effective until individual human beings have the unselfishness and the self control to accept it. Both *A Leaf in the Storm* and *The Century Was Young* are studies of national character as the root of national strength or weakness. The two novels are strongly contrasted; one suggests the causes of the decay of France, the other the reasons back of the indestructible spirit of China.

The Century Was Young has an ironic title, for it is by no means a study of youth and promise, but of decadence and despair. Louis Aragon's novel illustrates clearly what Van Wyck Brooks means by the "death drive" in modern literature; most of the people whom he describes are without standards and without idealism, motivated only by the most selfish personal desires.

In *A Leaf in the Storm* Lin Yutang writes of human beings moving through events far more terrible and tragic than those in France in the early part of the century, but motivated by the highest idealism, reacting with courage and dignity, and living nobly. Here is the "life-drive" in literature, that affirmation of belief in character and in essential human goodness which Brooks calls one of the fundamentals of good literature, and upon which Priestley bases his hopes of the future.

1. THE "DEATH-DRIVE"

The Century Was Young, by Louis Aragon

The translator's note at the back of the book gives an excellent sketch of the author; summarize this at the beginning of the review.

The story begins with the Trocadero Exposition in Paris in 1889. Why do you think the author chose this starting point? What national events are included in the novel? Bring out especially the significance of the Dreyfus case.

Does the author describe with equal understanding provincial France and Parisian France?

Comment on the children of the early part of the novel; does he write of them with sympathy and at times with beauty?

What are the controlling motives in Pierre Mercadier's life? Is he intended as a symbol of the France of his period?

Discuss the legend that grew up around Mercadier's name as a commentary on the literary fads of the period.

Connect French national characteristics as shown here with those revealed in Hans Habe's account of the French débâcle in *A Thousand Shall Fall*.

In *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* Van Wyck Brooks says that to be great a book must have "depth and breadth and elevation." Which of these dimensions do you find in *The Century Was Young*?

Can you agree with Matthew Josephson in comparing Louis Aragon to Balzac?

Additional Reading:

Paris, France, by Gertrude Stein.

2. THE "LIFE-DRIVE"

A Leaf in the Storm, by Lin Yutang

Readers of *Moment in Peking* will miss the rich warm background of family life so beautifully described there. What, in the interval, has happened to that sort of life? Should *A Leaf in the Storm* be considered as a sequel?

The novel is built up around three main characters: Poya, Lao Peng, and Malin. Describe each at the outset, and show how they are affected by the conditions of their time. Do their characters remain static?

Lao Peng is a Buddhist. What rôle do his religious beliefs play in the development of the story? Are they too frequently and obtrusively presented? What relation do you find here between Buddhism and Christianity?

Show how Lao Peng translates his religious beliefs into practical living.

Why did the author choose a woman of Malin's type? Could the main

theme of the novel, as exemplified in her development, be stated as the conflict between profane and sacred love?

Does anything in the earlier descriptions of Poya prepare you for his final sacrifice? What novel of Dickens does this sacrifice remind you of?

What do you think of Malin's final decision? Is it essentially Chinese? in keeping with her changed character?

What strong and enduring traits of Chinese character and life do you learn from this novel? How is Lin Yutang especially fitted to interpret his people to American readers?

According to the measuring stick of Van Wyck Brooks, do you find that *A Leaf in the Storm* has elevation, breadth and depth? Discuss it from each of these angles.

Additional Reading:

Moment in Peking, by Lin Yutang.

My Country and My People, by Lin Yutang.

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