

boy. Why does Poe describe it in so much detail? Does this lengthy description add anything to the story? Explain.

5. How does the narrator account for the peculiar circumstance that his rival has "the same Christian and surname" as himself? What other, similar coincidences appear in the story?

6. What is the narrator's position in respect to his schoolmates? How do they feel about him? Treat him? What is the nature of the "resistance" the narrator feels his namesake constantly directs at him? What kind of relationship do the two William Wilsons have? How do you explain their being "the most inseparable of companions"?

7. What is the "personal peculiarity that afflicts the speaker's double? What is its significance? Why does Poe endow the character with this particular trait?

8. Certain things about the second William Wilson, such as his "intolerable spirit of contradiction" and his perfect mimicry of the protagonist, are especially galling to the latter. How do you account for the strange fact that nobody else is aware of these things, that the other students are totally oblivious of the behavior the narrator finds so intolerable in his double? How does the narrator explain it?

9. What form does the second William Wilson's "interference" take?

10. What does the narrator see on the night he sneaks into his sleeping rival's bedroom and looks at his namesake's face in the lamplight? Why is the narrator so "awestricken" and terrified?

11. On what kinds of occasions does the narrator's mysterious double appear after the two leave school? Why does the narrator come to regard his namesake as a "tormentor" and a tyrant?

12. Explain what happens at the end of the story. In what sense is the double's last sentence true?

13. Repeatedly in the story, the narrator is tormented by the question of his "arch-enemy's" identity: ". . . who and what was this Wilson?—and whence came he?—and what were his purposes?" Poe, however, makes the answers to these questions clear to the reader. What are the answers?

The Lost Explorer

PATRICK MCGRATH

One fresh and gusty day in the damp autumn of her twelfth year Evelyn found a lost explorer in the garden of her parents' London home. He was lying in a small tent beneath a mosquito net so torn and gaping as to be quite inadequate, were there any mosquitoes for it to protect him from. His clothes were stained with sweat and blood, and a grizzled beard stubbled his emaciated face. On the folding stool beside the camp bed stood a flask, empty, a revolver, unloaded, two bullets, three matches, a small oil lamp, and a dirty, creased map of the upper reaches of the Congo. He was delirious with fever and occasionally gibbered about the pygmies. Evelyn thought he was wonderful.

And he thought she was wonderful, too. When the delirium had passed and he lay, pale, spent, and shivering, she loomed out of the fog that was his consciousness like a bright ministering angel.

"Agatha," he whispered. "I want a drink of water." The angel vanished, and the explorer lay panting feebly in his tiny tent. In the deep, still place at the center of his frenzied mind a flame of hope was lit, for Agatha was here. What had happened was this: the explorer had mistaken Evelyn for the nanny who'd nursed him through a childhood illness!

Evelyn returned to the tent with a cup of water. She folded back the ragged netting and helped the explorer onto an elbow. Much of the water spilled onto his bush jacket, but at length his parched lips smacked up their fill and he lay back, exhausted. Evelyn gazed down at him with benevolent compassion.

"Agatha," he whispered, "give me your hand." She knelt on the ground beside the camp bed and took the explorer's clammy palm in her fingers. A ghost of a smile hovered at the cracked edges of the man's lips. "Agatha," he sighed; but then, seized suddenly with a fresh wave of panic, he started up from his bed. "The pygmies, Agatha!" he shouted. "I hear the pygmies!"

Evelyn remained calm. She laid her cool hand upon his fevered temples. The traffic of London murmured in the thoroughfares beyond. "They're miles away," she whispered. "They don't know you're here."

"They're coming!" he shouted, his head jerking from side to side and his red-rimmed eyes abulge. "They're coming to eat us!"

New York
Eds. Harold Schechter & Jonina G. Semelics
From Discoveries 1992 Oxford University Press
and Blood and Water and Other Tales 1988 2nd Ed.

"Nonsense," breathed Evelyn, stroking that troubled brow. "No one's going to eat us."

The panic passed; a moment later the tension was visibly draining from the explorer's body. He sank back onto the camp bed. "Agatha," he said weakly, his hand still clutching hers. "You're good."

"Rest," murmured Evelyn. "Sleep. You're safe now. Sleep."

When she was sure the explorer was sound asleep, Evelyn skipped up the garden to the house. A washing line was strung from a post at the top of the steps to a tree by the wall at the side of the house. To this line were pegged three white sheets, all flapping wildly in the wind. Dead leaves spun about the girl as she pattered gracefully up the steps from the garden. She opened the back door. Her mother and Mrs. Guppy were bent over the oven with their backsides to her.

"Are you quite sure it's done, Mrs. Guppy?" her mother was saying.

"It's had twenty-five minutes, Mrs. Piker-Smith. It must be done."

"Oh, I do hope so. Gerald is so fussy about his chop. Ah, there you are, Evelyn. Run and wash your hands, dear, and we'll eat."

Mrs. Piker-Smith was a plump, tweedy woman, and she was commonly in the throes of mild anxiety. Ten minutes later she sat at the dining-room table gazing at her husband, Gerald, the eminent surgeon. He in turn was gazing at his chop. Evelyn had already started to eat, and paid no attention to either of them.

"Is it all right, dear?" said Mrs. Piker-Smith. "We gave it almost half-an-hour." Her own knife and fork were poised at a shallow angle above her plate. A sudden gust rattled the windowpane. The surgeon tentatively sliced a small section of meat and raised the fork to his lips. He chewed the meat thoughtfully, his eyes wandering about the ceiling and upper walls as he did so. Finally he swallowed and, laying down his cutlery, dabbed at his lips with a starched white napkin. "It's quite thoroughly cooked, Denise," he said, his eyes suddenly settling upon his wife's troubled face. "You need not worry so."

"Oh, good," said Mrs. Piker-Smith, brightening, and with some gusto cut a potato in two. "What have you been doing all morning, Evelyn?" she said, turning to her daughter.

"Oh, nothing."

"Nothing?" said her father, eating.

"Just playing in the garden, Daddy."

"What ever does the child get up to?" he murmured, as he transferred a spot of English mustard from the side of his plate to a neat rectangle of chop.

"Daddy."

"Yes, Evelyn?"

"Are there still pygmies in the Congo?"

A frown briefly ruffled the calm surface of the surgeon's fine-domed brow, like a breeze whispering across a lake. "I believe so. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, school."

"Are you doing Africa, darling?" said Mrs. Piker-Smith.

"Sort of."

"It's not called the Congo anymore," said Daddy. "It became Zaïre when the Belgians left."

"When was that, Daddy?"

"Nineteen-sixty, I think."

After lunch Evelyn always had to go to her room and read on her bed for an hour. Today she stood at the bedroom window, gazing into the garden and thinking about her explorer. White clouds fled like driven rags across the blustering blue sky, and the branches of the great elm at the bottom of the garden flailed about like the arms of drowning men. The Piker-Smiths' was one of those long narrow gardens enclosed by an old wall whose crumbling red bricks were overgrown with ivy. The path ran from the foot of the back-door steps between two flowerbeds and then twisted over a stretch of lawn before arriving at a small round goldfish pond, the surface of which was half-hidden by clusters of green-fronded water lilies. Beyond the pond a gardening shed, its windows misted with dust and cobwebs and its door secured by a huge rusting padlock, clung in ramshackle fashion to the corner formed by the east wall and the end wall. The rest of the garden beyond the pond was a tangled and overgrown mass of rhododendron bushes, into whose labyrinthine depths, since the death of the old gardener, only Evelyn now ventured. It was in that tangled thicket of evergreens that the explorer's tent was pitched, and there that the man himself lay struggling with a furious malaria. The three white sheets billowed in the wind, and for an instant Evelyn imagined the house and the garden as a great ship shouldering on to the tropics. Absently she picked up a jar containing a pickled thumb that Daddy had given her. She swirled it round in its liquid and willed the time to pass.

When her hour was up, Evelyn came downstairs to find Daddy in the hall just leaving for the hospital. He was telling Mummy something about dinner: the Cleghorns were coming and there was no sherry in the house. Then Daddy said goodbye and left.

"Now, darling," said Mrs. Piker-Smith, "I'm off to my bridge. You'll be all right till Mrs. Guppy gets back?"

"Yes, Mummy."

Then Mrs. Piker-Smith left too. Evelyn was alone. She was down the back-door steps in a flash, under the billowing sheets, across the lawn and into the bushes. The explorer was still fast asleep. Evelyn knelt beside him and watched his face with intense concentration for some minutes. Then her gaze drifted to the objects on his camp stool, and settled on the black revolver. She had never touched a gun before, and it fascinated her. She reached out hesitantly, and clasped it by the grip. How cold and slippery it was! And how heavy! She lifted it and pressed the barrel to her cheek.

It smelled metallic and oily. She touched it once with her tongue, and recoiled with a small shock as she tasted its steely sweetness. Ugh! She cradled it in her palms, in her lap, and stared at it solemnly. How would you put bullets into it? She could turn the cylinder, but she could not release it. Perhaps this little catch . . .

Evelyn screamed: a large, scarred hand, dark brown, very dirty, with hair on the back and cracked fingernails, had clamped onto her own slim fingers and held them fast. It was the explorer's hand. He was up on one elbow, staring at her, and his harrowed face was clenched and twitching with anger. She gazed at him with wide, shocked eyes. He took the revolver from her. "And the bullet," he growled, picking it from her open palm. He took the other bullet from the camp stool and then, his eyes darting from the girl to the revolver, he loaded two chambers.

"One for you, Agatha," he said hoarsely, "one for me." He nodded several times. "This way: quick—sure—painless. Better death, foil the pygmies, what." He subsided onto his back, suddenly exhausted. His fingers twitched upon the sweat-stained canvas of the cot, and a sudden access of perspiration left him pale and dripping. His eyes bulged, then fixed upon a point on the roof of the tent. His whole body shivered, and a limp hand fluttered from the canvas like an injured bird. "Agatha," he moaned; and Evelyn, dropping to her knees, took his hand.

All afternoon the fever raged, and the explorer mumbled incoherently throughout. On several occasions he was convulsed with terror, and rose up shouting that the pygmies were hard by; but each time Evelyn calmed and soothed the troubled man, mopped his brow and gave him water; and in his few moments of lucidity he gazed at her with weak, shining eyes and murmured the name Agatha. For in the turmoil of his disordered mind he lay in a child's bedroom, in a child's bed, with a stuffed golliwog beside him, and a kindly woman in a sort of ruffled white cap and a starched white apron briskly ministering to his child's disease; and thus did Evelyn appear to him.

When the light began at last to thicken, and the dusk of that autumnal day crept into the explorer's tent and pooled itself in clots of shadow in the corners of the tent, a voice came calling, "Evelyn! Evelyn!" The man stirred in his uneasy doze, muttering, and Evelyn leaned close to him. "I have to go," she whispered. "Sleep now, and I'll come back. . . ."

He seemed about to rise from the camp bed and cry out; his eyes opened wide for an instant; but then the netherworld of shadows and confusion reclaimed him, and he sank once more into sleep of a sort. Evelyn spread upon his twitching limbs the blanket she had brought out from the house; and then she padded silently away, through the bushes, and onto the path back to the house.

The Cleghorns were old friends of the family, so Evelyn was permitted to eat with the grown-ups. Mrs. Cleghorn—Auntie Vera—was a large dark

woman with good teeth. She wore heavy lipstick and was married to an anesthetist called Frank—Uncle Frank—a colleague of Gerald's. Mummy and Auntie Vera often played bridge together, and it was about bridge that they were talking when Evelyn entered the drawing room, just before dinner. Everybody was drinking a rather nice South African sherry, and Evelyn was invited to have a juice. Then Mrs. Piker-Smith went to see Mrs. Guppy in the kitchen, and as the two men drew aside to talk shop for a moment Auntie Vera's great black eyes swiveled round on Evelyn like a pair of undimmed headlights.

"Evelyn," she cried, plumping a cushion with a large white hand. "Come here and sit next to me. How is school?" Evelyn liked Auntie Vera, but she was rather in awe of her. She sat down on the sofa, pressing her slender legs together and clasping her hands in her lap. "We're on half-term," she said, looking at the carpet.

"Half-term!" cried Auntie Vera. "How marvelous!"

"Yes," said Evelyn with great seriousness. "Do you know anything about Africa, Auntie Vera?" A coal fire crackled in the grate; above the mantelpiece hung a mirror, and invitations to social functions, mostly connected to the hospital, were tucked into the inside edge of the frame.

"Frank took me to Cairo for our honeymoon," said Auntie Vera, taking Evelyn's hand. "He pretended I was Cleopatra!" Evelyn turned toward her and found the great black headlamps shining with delight and the tip of Auntie Vera's tongue resting on her top lip.

Conversation at the dinner table ranged widely from the price of sherry to the price of beef. Gerald mentioned a rather interesting colostomy he'd performed after lunch, and Uncle Frank made some quips which might, in a nonmedical household, have been taken in rather bad taste. Only once did Evelyn pay any attention, and that was during the main course, when Auntie Vera turned to her husband and said, "Frank, Evelyn is interested in Africa."

Is she?" said Frank Cleghorn.

"Not all Africa, Uncle Frank," said Evelyn. "Just the Congo."

"Ah, the Congo!" said Uncle Frank flatly, and began to tell the story of Henry Morton Stanley, digressing rather amusingly to mention the tragic shooting death of John Hanning Speke mere hours before the eagerly awaited debate with Richard Burton on the source of the Nile; that was in 1864. Evelyn was sitting opposite Uncle Frank, who had his back to the door of the dining room, which was half-open; as Evelyn half-listened to his affable drone, she suddenly saw, over his shoulder, pausing in the doorway as he shuffled toward the stairs, the explorer. He turned his head and stared at her. Fortunately, she did not cry out; Auntie Vera was deep in animated bridge talk with Mummy, and Daddy was concentrating on a delicate incision he was about to make in a slice of reddish beef. Uncle Frank warbled on, and in the doorway behind his back stood the haggard, feverish man, and oh, how ill he looked! His head hung weakly on sagging shoulders; his eyes burned with a low, sickly gleam out of sunken sockets in an unshaven

face deeply etched with gullies of suffering. His clothes looked extraordinarily ragged and filthy against the beige flowered wallpaper of the hallway, and his scarred, grimy hands still twitched convulsively where they dangled at his sides. Evelyn stared at him wide-eyed, and Uncle Frank was flattered at the raptness of her attention. It was only after some moments that he realized her eyes were focused not upon his own but beyond them; and he began, even as his discourse flowed forward, to turn in his seat. But at precisely the same instant the explorer shuffled off down the hallway out of sight; so that Uncle Frank, seeing nothing, turned back and talked on. Daddy, having completed his incision, lifted his fork and his eyes and turned to the anesthetist as his teeth closed upon the meat; and Auntie Vera lifted her wineglass while Mummy peered anxiously into the gravy boat.

When at last Evelyn was able to get away, she dashed upstairs; and as she had half-feared, and half-hoped, the explorer was in her bedroom. Not only was he in her bedroom, he was in her *bed*, fully clothed, the sheets up to his chin. His teeth were chattering loudly and his whole body shivered beneath the bedclothes.

"Cold," he grunted as Evelyn closed the door behind her and ran to the bed. "Cold, Agatha," he said more clearly, and she reached under the bedclothes for his hand. It was frigid. Something else was down there too—she felt the hard metallic bulge of the revolver, stuffed into the explorer's waistband. "Let me have the gun," she whispered.

A tremor passed across the pathetic features of the dying man. "Need will," he muttered. "Need will to do it. Pygmies . . ." Here he paused, and his chest heaved painfully with the effort to talk, the effort to think. Oh, how he wanted simply to slip away, let go, sink into peace and rest and silence and darkness!—but he could not let go, not yet. "Pygmies," he said, more loudly, and Evelyn with terror clapped her hand upon his parched and cracking lips. The wild eyes darted to her bedroom door. He knew they were near. "Pygmies," he whispered, when she lifted her palm from his mouth. "Coming to eat us. One for you, Agatha, one for me . . ."

"Don't talk," said Evelyn, her finger to her lips. "We won't be eaten. Sleep. I'll give you a drink."

Evelyn fetched a drink of water, and the explorer's eyes, as she supported his shoulders and held the cup to his lips, rested on her face with an expression of such profound pain, and gratitude, and spirit that it tested the girl's mettle pretty sternly. But she did not flinch nor falter, and when he had drunk she eased his head back onto her pillow and stroked his chilly brow.

"Agatha," he murmured, "Agatha," and his grip on her fingers loosened very slightly.

The rest of that evening was nerve-racking for Evelyn. She went downstairs to say good night to Uncle Frank and Auntie Vera, and to Mummy and Daddy, and then darted back up to her bedroom. She could only hope

that Mummy wouldn't come to tuck her in tonight; it was something she did occasionally, by no means invariably. Evelyn made up a bed for herself on the carpet, and turned off the light. The explorer seemed to be sleeping soundly. She listened in the darkness for Mummy and Daddy coming up to bed. Daddy was first; she heard him brushing his teeth in the bathroom. Then Mummy came up, and stopped at the top of the stairs. Evelyn's heart was beating fit to burst; hot chemicals discharged and flooded in turmoil about her viscera; go to bed, Mummy, a voice in her brain screamed silently, *go to bed, Mummy!* Steps across the landing, and then—a *hand on Evelyn's door handle!*

The tension, in the few moments that followed, was, to Evelyn, lying there in the darkness, her eyes wide and her stomach awash with adrenaline, almost unendurable. Frightful scenarios unfolded at lightning speed in her febrile imagination. How could Mummy and Daddy be expected to understand about the explorer? And the gun! What if—

"Denise!"

Even as the handle turned, her father's voice called from the bathroom.

"What is it, Gerald?" replied her mother in hushed tones.

"Have we any dental floss?"

"On the shelf, dear." The door handle was still depressed; Evelyn desperately wanted to go to the bathroom herself.

"No, I don't see it."

"Oh, Gerald," murmured Mrs. Piker-Smith; and, wifely duty superseding maternal solicitude in the ethical hierarchy of that good woman, she tiptoed to the bathroom and located the dental floss. A short conversation about the beef ensued; and then Mrs. Piker-Smith went into the bedroom, closely followed by her husband, and their door; to Evelyn's immense relief, closed behind them. But it was another excruciating hour before she dared get up and creep to the bathroom.

The next morning the explorer was dead. Silently, and, one hopes, peacefully, in the middle of the night, he had passed away. Evelyn awoke at six and realized it immediately. He was stiff and staring, and when she laid her hand upon his face, his skin was even colder than it had been last night. She closed his eyes; and then she lay on the bed beside him, on top of the blankets, and she wept quietly for ten minutes. She wept into her blankets as the fact of the loss of that long-suffering man rose up starkly in her heart, and she wept too for herself, for she was desolate. Her sorrow was keen, but it would not fester; and when she rose from her bed, wet-eyed and gulping back the hot taste of grief in her throat, she tried to think clearly what was best. But first she must air the room, and the bed, and change the sheets, for the stink of a man too long in the jungle hung heavy in Evelyn's bedroom.

Fever had weakened him, diminished him, and the body was light. Evelyn, though skinny, was strong from hockey, and she dragged him from the bed to the closet quite easily. She sat him in the darkest corner, cov-

ered him up with a pair of old school raincoats, and pushed all her clothes to that end of the rail. Then she opened wide the windows, stuffed the sheets into her laundry basket, and climbed under the blankets, where she lay in a state of rising anxiety till Mummy should come to wake her.

"Darling, you'll catch your death!" cried Mrs. Piker-Smith when she came in at half past eight. The windows were wide open and the day was very blustery indeed. The curtains flapped wildly and the air was chill. Even so, there were traces. "What's that funny smell, darling?" said Mummy, standing by the closet door and wrinkling her nose. Evelyn, simulating a slow awakening, mumbled incomprehensibly from the bed. Mrs. Piker-Smith stood frowning a moment more. "It must be your hockey things," she decided. "Give them to Mrs. Guppy, darling, and they'll be clean for school."

Mumble.

"It's eight-thirty, darling"—and she went downstairs.

Evelyn stood panting in the tent. All morning the explorer had remained in her closet, and those hours had not been easy for the girl. But after lunch Daddy had gone back to the hospital, Mummy had gone to her bridge, and Mrs. Guppy had gone shopping. Evelyn breathed a prayer of thanks that all their lives were subject to such seemingly immutable routine. She'd hauled him out of the closet then and dragged him downstairs. She'd moved slowly, backwards, clutching him by the armpits. His head lolled about on his chest and his feet bumped limply on the stairs. In death he seemed so small, so light, that Evelyn was again unhappy, and her eyes brimmed with tears as she dragged him across the linoleum of the kitchen floor. She laid him down for a moment and went for a glass of water. Over the sink was the kitchen window, and it looked down on the garden. Mrs. Guppy had brought in the three white sheets; her own sheets had not yet replaced them; instead, the line was alive in the wind with her parents' underwear. The elm at the bottom of the garden was once more whipping its limbs about. A large Persian cat paused upon the wall by the gardener's old shed, then stalked off with dignity, picking a path along the top of the wall with its tail stiffly aloft. Evelyn had drunk her water and then manhandled the explorer down the steps, between the flowerbeds, across the lawn and round the goldfish pond, into the bushes and so to the tent. And now she would bury him.

Evelyn had long since broken open the old padlock on the shed door, and it hung there now only to hold the door. She slipped it out of the eye and the door swung open. A damp, fetid smell, dusty, earthy, filled the shed. The light with difficulty penetrated the place; a large heap of sacks moldered gently in the corner, and the old plank floor was suspiciously damp thereabouts. Evelyn had once poked about in that corner, but now she tended to avoid it, for the floor was rotten beneath the sacks, and the three substances, sacking, wood, and the earth beneath the rotten wood, had begun to coalesce, as if attempting, in their nostalgia for some primeval

state of slime, to abandon structure and identity, all that could distinguish or separate them. Other signs of regression and breakdown were manifest in that dusty old shed; upon the windowsill, beneath the vast network of cobwebs, lay the stiff little corpses, some partially digested, of flies and other small winged insects, many with their tiny legs curled pathetically over them as if in a final and futile gesture of self-closure. An old cardboard box, moist with decay, was damply merging with the wall, and in it a heap of parts from some long-forgotten automobile engine congealed blackly rigid, petrifying like coal as the work of time and damp smudged them with rust and rendered their decadent inutility ever more irrevocable. Photographs had once been pinned to the wall of the shed; these now curled at the edges like the legs of the flies, and as regards their degenerated content barely a trace could now be detected of the humans who had stood, once, before the camera, vital, one presumes, and alive. It was as though they had died in the bad air, the malaria, of that neglected little corner of the garden, the thin dusty air of the old shed, within which everything must devolve to a fused state of formless unity. . . .

But Evelyn had no time to relish regression today. She stepped across the floor and seized up a spade, its blade spotted orange with rust but its handle as yet sturdy and whole. This she took from the shed and, closing the rickety door behind her and replacing the great padlock, ran back through the windy sunshine of that October afternoon and again entered the bushes.

And now she worked briskly and methodically. She collapsed the filthy tent, noticing as she did so the multitudes of tiny equatorial insects clustering in the seams and corners. She dropped it in the corner of the clearing, and then laid the explorer upon it, and his bed beside him, and then the camp stool with its few pitiful possessions—remnants of the explorer's last wild dash from the Congo, pursued by anthropophagous pygmies who had once existed either in the reality of that far jungle or in the fevered mind of her strange and needy visitor, Evelyn could not know which. And then she dug. For two hours she dug; her young limbs strong from hockey, she tore a steadily widening, steadily deepening hole out of the earth in the center of the clearing in the midst of the rhododendron bushes at the bottom of the garden. And when she was finished she lined the hole with the tent. And then she burned that old map of his, creased and sweat-stained; she set it afire with the odd vestas he had left on the folding stool, and the ashes fell into the pit. And then she tossed in the gun, having hauled it with a sob from the dead man's waistband; and then the flask and the oil lamp, and then the man himself, into his grave, but not unmourned, and maybe this is all that any of us can ask for.

She saw him, occasionally, in the months that followed, always from her bedroom window when the moon was up. He'd be standing at the goldfish pond, his face pale and gleaming in the moonlight and his hands twitching at his sides. He'd look up at her window and she'd slowly move her palm back and forth in greeting. And though the fever was still upon him, he

seemed no longer in mortal fear of the pygmies—yes, a subtle theme of peace had entered the symphony of his diseased being, if being indeed he was. Perhaps, after all, he was nothing; Evelyn began to see him less and less frequently after that, and at around the time—she'd have been about fourteen-and-a-half then—the time she decided to become a doctor, he disappeared from her life completely, and she never saw him again.

QUESTIONS

"The Lost Explorer"

1. Look closely at the first sentence of the story. How does it establish the tone for the narrative that follows? Why is this tone (which seems to accept the utterly marvelous with absolute matter-of-factness) so apt, given the subject of the story?
2. What kind of girl is Evelyn? Does she strike you as a typical child? Why or why not? How does she differ from her parents? How would you describe her parents and their day-to-day existence? To what degree does Evelyn inhabit a dramatically different kind of world?
3. Characterize the tone of the following sentence: "Conversation at the dinner table ranged widely from the price of sherry to the price of beef." What comment is the author making about the interests and sensibilities of adults as compared to those of children?
4. Describe the lost explorer. Is he real or imaginary? Support your answer with specific references to the story.
5. In what sense can the explorer be seen as the Other—the personification of Evelyn's secret inner life? What aspects of that life does he embody?
6. Look at the extended description of the gardening shed. Why does the author depict its decaying interior in such detail? Is this passage simply an adroit bit of descriptive writing—a beautifully drawn but gratuitous picture of rot and "regression"? Or does it serve some larger, thematic purpose in the story? Explain.
7. What happens at the ends of the story? What gives the last line its poignancy? What does "becoming a doctor" seem to represent to the author? What does he appear to be saying about the process of growing up and its effect on the imagination?

Double Face

AMY TAN

My daughter wanted to go to China for her second honeymoon, but now she is afraid.

"What if I blend in so well they think I'm one of them?" Waverly asked me. "What if they don't let me come back to the United States?"

"When you go to China," I told her, "you don't even need to open your mouth. They already know you are an outsider."

"What are you talking about?" she asked. My daughter likes to speak back. She likes to question what I say.

"Aii-ya," I said. "Even if you put on their clothes, even if you take off your makeup and hide your fancy jewelry, they know. They know just watching the way you walk, the way you carry your face. They know you do not belong."

My daughter did not look pleased when I told her this, that she didn't look Chinese. She had a sour American look on her face. Oh, maybe ten years ago, she would have clapped her hands—hurray!—as if this were good news. But now she wants to be Chinese, it is so fashionable. And I know it is too late. All those years I tried to teach her! She followed my Chinese ways only until she learned how to walk out the door by herself and go to school. So now the only Chinese words she can say are *shsh*, *houche*, *chr fan*, and *wan deng shweijyau*. How can she talk to people in China with these words? Pee-pee, choo-choo train, eat, close light sleep. How can she think she can blend in? Only her skin and her hair are Chinese. Inside—she is all American-made.

It's my fault she is this way. I wanted my children to have the best combination: American circumstances and Chinese character. How could I know these two things do not mix?

I taught her how American circumstances work. If you are born poor here, it's no lasting shame. You are first in line for a scholarship. If the roof crashes on your head, no need to cry over this bad luck. You can sue anybody, make the landlord fix it. You do not have to sit like a Buddha under a tree letting pigeons drop their dirty business on your head. You can buy an umbrella. Or go inside a Catholic church. In America, nobody says you have to keep the circumstances somebody else gives you.

fable about societal decay. Among her other novels are her tetralogy, *Children of Violence* (1952–1969), *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971), and *The Good Terrorist* (1986). Her short story collections include *The Habit of Loving* (1960), *A Man and Two Women* (1963), *African Stories* (1964), and *The Sun Between Their Feet* (1973).

BERNARD MALAMUD (1914–1986), one of the major American writers of the post-World War II period, was born in Brooklyn, New York, where his immigrant parents owned a small grocery store. He earned his B.A. degree from the City College of New York in 1936 and his M.A. from Columbia University in 1942. After teaching evening classes in high school English for a number of years, he joined the faculty of Oregon State University in 1949. He left Oregon in 1961 for Bennington College in Vermont, where he taught writing until his death, twenty-five years later. Malamud's first novel, *The Natural* appeared in 1952. Blending realism and myth, baseball lore and Arthurian legend, the book is a powerful fable about the failure of heroism in modern-day America. His second novel, *The Assistant* (1957)—which many critics regard as his masterpiece—deals with two of Malamud's dominant themes: Jewishness as a metaphor of the human condition and the redemptive potential of suffering and sacrifice. A master short-story writer whose work reflects the influence both of Jewish storytelling traditions and the moral allegories of American Romantics like Hawthorne and Melville, Malamud won the National Book Award for his first collection, *The Magic Barrel* (1958). He published two more volumes of short stories *Idiot's First* (1963) and *Rembrandt's Hat* (1973). Among his other novels are the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Fixer* (1966), *The Tenants* (1971), and *Dubin's Lives* (1979).

CARSON MCCULLERS (1917–1967) was born and raised in small-town Georgia, the setting for her best-known fiction. A gifted pianist, she briefly attended the Juilliard School of Music in New York City before switching to Columbia University, where she studied creative writing at night while working at various jobs during the day. Her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, appeared in 1940, when she was only twenty-three. An immediate popular and critical success, it established her reputation as a literary master in the "Southern gothic" mode. Rife with sensationalistic incidents and populated by freaks, cripples, and grotesques, her novels and stories function as haunting fables about human isolation, por-

traying desperately lonely characters hungering for compassion and love. Though her second novel, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941) was deemed a disappointment, she followed it with two of her most acclaimed works, "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe" (1943) and *The Member of the Wedding* (1946). In 1950, her stage adaptation of the latter became a hit show on Broadway. The last decade of her life was marked by personal misfortune and failing health. Her final, poorly received novel, *Clock Without Hands*, appeared in 1961, six years before her death at age fifty. Her stories are available in *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe and Other Stories* (1967) and *Collected Stories* (1973).

PATRICK MCGRATH (1950–) was born in London and grew up near Broadmoor Hospital—a lunatic asylum housing some of England's most dangerously deranged criminals—where for many years his father was Medical Superintendent. McGrath's interest in horror and the grotesque was stimulated by the stories he heard from his father, who, at the family dinner table, often related the case histories of his patients—the man who decapitated his mother and baked her head in the oven, the woman who ducked under her bedclothes one night and removed her eyes with a teaspoon. After receiving a B.A. Honors degree from the University of London in 1971, McGrath moved to Canada, where he worked in a maximum security mental hospital. He then spent several years on a remote island in the North Pacific before moving to New York City, his current place of residence, in 1981. Besides his book reviews and essays, which have appeared in various publications, McGrath is the author of three books of Gothic fiction, all widely praised by critics for their elegant prose and imaginative power—*Blood and Water and Other Tales* (1988), *The Grotesque* (1989), and *The Spider* (1990).

JAMES ALAN MCPHERSON (1943–) was born in Savannah, Georgia. His writing career began during his student years at Harvard Law School when one of his short stories won first prize in a major literary contest sponsored by *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. After receiving his law degree, he entered the writing program at the University of Iowa, where he earned an M.F.A. in 1969. His first collection of short stories, *Hue and Cry* (1969), was widely admired by critics, who praised his ability "to look