

SYNOPSIS

Dunstan Ramsay, a history teacher for forty-five years at Colborne College, a school for privileged boys in Toronto, tells his life story to his present headmaster. He is protesting an inane farewell article on him, written for the school paper at the time of Ramsay's retirement, by a junior teacher.

Ramsay grew up in the small Ontario town of Deptford. Originally, his name was Dunstable (his mother's family name). An incident in his youth shapes his entire future: he and his life-long friend, Percy Boy Staunton, quarrel and Percy throws a snowball, with a stone inside of it, at him. It misses but hits Mary Dempster, the pregnant wife of the Baptist minister. This precipitates the premature birth of her son, Paul. Mary is affected mentally and, although Percy feels no guilt for the incident, Ramsay does, and takes a strong interest in the lives of both Mary and Paul. Mary becomes the major force in his life from this point on.

Ramsay is interested in magic and in the lives of the saints and teaches Paul what he knows. When Paul's father discovers this he forbids further contact between them. Mary Dempster has the habit of wandering and one night she enrages the villagers by her charity to a tramp in a gravel pit. From then on her husband keeps her tied up within her home but Ramsay, by sneaking in, continues to visit her.

On one occasion, Ramsay believes his brother, Willie, has died and he rushes over to the Dempster house, unties Mary and she brings Willie back to life. Ramsay is alone in thinking Mary has performed a miracle.

Leola Cruikshank, the village beauty, who is Percy Staunton's girl, switches her affections to Ramsay when Percy is found with another girl and they maintain a teenage love for each other. Ramsay's mother tries to retain possession of her "wee Laddie" but he evades her force by slipping away from home to join the army and be involved in World War I.

At Passchendaele in November 1917, Dunstable shoots up a German machine-gun nest and is wounded. Before he blacks out, he sees a vision of a Madonna with the face of Mary Dempster. He regains consciousness a half year later in an English hospital, minus a leg and terribly scarred, but in the care of an attractive English nurse, Diana Marfleet. He realizes his attraction to Diana may lead to a possession by another mother, a wife-mother. He extricates himself, but only after she has rechristened him Dunstan (after St. Dunstan) on Christmas Day.

When Ramsay returns to Deptford with a Victoria Cross awarded by the King, he is given a hero's welcome. He discovers that Leola has been unfaithful to him and has now returned to the arms of Percy, who has also changed his name—to Boy Staunton. Ramsay's mother and father have died in the influenza epidemic in 1918. He also learns that Paul ran away with a circus when he was ten and Mary Dempster has been taken to live with an aunt, in Toronto.

Ramsay attends university, studies history, and becomes a teacher, or school master as he calls it. Boy attends university too and becomes a popular figure, using his wealthy father's allowance to make additional money on the stock market. He models himself on the Prince of Wales and eventually marries Leola, with Ramsay as his best man. They have a baby, christened Edward David after the Duke, and become Anglican, largely for social reasons.

One day at school, Ramsay meets Joel Sturgeon, the tramp who had once been found with Mary Dempster. Joel has been converted by that event and now runs a mission for the poor. Ramsay is convinced that since Mary Dempster has committed three miracles she is a saint and he confronts the Catholic priest in Deptford about this possibility. The priest suggests Mary may be a "fool-saint" or false saint whose virtues are tainted with madness. Ramsay visits Mary and finally, after her aunt dies, has her placed in an asylum, as the only thing he can do to help her.

Ramsay now devotes all his private time to research into the lives of the saints and this interest leads him to a village in the Tyrol in search of knowledge about St. Uncumber. There he meets Paul, now the custodian of Le Solitaire des forests. Paul has a new name, Faustus Legrand.

Ramsay gets involved with the Bollandists, Jesuits who record information about saints. Seventy-six-year-old Father Blazon, who counsels him, gives him insights into the meaning of Mary Dempster in his life. God works subtly. He should seek for the meaning of sainthood within himself.

Ramsay's interests brand him as an eccentric and he is rejected for the role of permanent Headmaster. Boy continues to make money, even during the Depression, and assists Ramsay with financial tips. He is largely unsuccessful in his attempt to educate and change Leola and becomes more and more unfaithful to her. After a desperate attempt to rekindle Ramsay's interest in her, she attempts suicide and soon she dies. Boy apparently feels little loss.

On a trip to Mexico, Ramsay again encounters Paul Dempster, now renamed Magnus Eisengrim, and possibly the best magician alive. Two of his companions are the beautiful Faustina and the grotesque seductress, Liesl Vitzliputzli, who gives Ramsay the job of writing an elegant and imaginative autobiography of Eisengrim. Although attracted initially to Faustina, he learns much from Liesl, wrestles with her and by discovering the importance of Evil and the irrational, succeeds in reconciling the various interior conditions of life into a whole and amenable personality. Liesl also proceeds to tell Ramsay in detail what "Fifth Business" means.

After returning to Ontario, Ramsay tells Mary Dempster about her son but she turns violent in her madness, believing he has deliberately kept him from her and he does not see her again until her death.

Boy has entered politics as a Conservative but is not successful. He meets Denyse Hornick, who campaigns to have him

FIFTH BUSINESS

made lieutenant governor of Ontario. Boy lets her marry him, despite the dislike of his children for her and her daughter from a previous marriage, not realizing she will devour him.

Ramsay tries to warn him about the importance of preparing for old age, but to no avail.

In a hospital in Vienna, Ramsay visits Padre Blazon who gives him further insights into self-discovery. Upon his return to Canada, he meets with Boy and Magnus and discovers that he is indeed *Fifth Business*. He shows them the stone, that he has retained as a paperweight, the same stone that Boy had once put into the snowball that hit Mary. This serves as a reminder to Boy of the events of his past, a past that Boy has never really come to terms with. He drives his Cadillac off a Toronto pier with the fateful stone clenched in his teeth. At Eisengrim's performance at the Royal Alexandra the next night, it is Liesl, speaking through the Brazen Head, who cryptically answers the question, "Who killed Boy Staunton?" It is Liesl who writes to Dunstan, after his heart attack, to join her and Paul in Switzerland. From there he writes the letter to the Headmaster.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Thamesville, Ontario, in 1913, Robertson Davies was educated in Ontario and at Oxford. While in England he taught at the Old Vic Drama School. He became a journalist, an editor and a newspaper publisher and finally, in 1963, Master at Massey College, a graduate college at The University of Toronto, a position he held until his retirement in 1981.

During his early careers, Davies wrote plays, many with satirical barbs about the lack of cultural sophistication in Canada. None were great successes. Similar themes were displayed in a newspaper column he wrote under the pseudonym of Samuel Marchbanks.

In 1950, Davies' first novels — three that are now called the *Salterton* trilogy — were published and in the 1970's *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore* and *World of Wonders*, his *Deptford* trilogy. In the next two decades he produced another three-some, the *Cornish* trilogy: *Rebel Angels*, *What's Bred in the Bone* and *The Lyre of Orpheus*. His *Murder and Walking Spirits* came out in 1991. His novels all deal with serious soul-searching explorations of the human condition, often founded on the theories of C.G. Jung, and are full of humour and magical narrative tricks.

CRITIC'S CORNER

A large and impressive body of scholarly work on *Fifth Business* has emerged. Critics tend to look for didactic "meanings" in his writings and often have difficulties pinpointing these in Davies' work. Does it present a single point-of-view as presented by an elitist narrator who has learned from "his" masters and is now teaching others, or does Davies pit various authorities against each other without presenting conclusions? Critics disagree. What is Davies' ideology? Some critics suggest he trivializes social problems and is "anti-modern." All agree that he is a consummate story-teller and that he can make people believe in the "realities" he creates. As a young man, Davies was an actor, and, like his favourite author, Charles Dickens, he practices the magic of his art with a series of roles and performances. Critics disagree about Davies' position in Canadian letters. Some find his egotism elitist and consider his work modest, but for the most part he is revered as an international writer whose art, according to John Kenneth Galbraith, "will be recognized with the very best of this century."

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the sources of *Fifth Business*, in particular the principles of Jungian psychology
2. To explore the concepts of good and evil; appearance or reality and illusion
3. To examine the dark sides of personal behaviour and of social alliances as portrayed in the novel
4. To explore the anomalies of secular sainthood, the psyche of the soul, magic as truth
5. To examine the use made of myth and legend in this novel and in our lives
6. To recognize the significance of the title and its significance to the book
7. To debate whether *Fifth Business* represents a single point-of-view or several and to attempt to define some of Davies' ideology
8. To examine the significance of master/apprentice relationships in the book
9. To examine the degree to which the novel reflects a Canadian sensibility and to explore Davies' status in the Canadian literary tradition
10. To examine and evaluate scholarly work done on this novel

MEANING STUDY

Below are sentences, or thought units that have a particular significance in the novel. Explore the meaning each has. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. "...she was too much a mother to me, and as I had one mother, and lost her I was not in a hurry to acquire another — not even a young and beautiful one with whom I could play Oedipus to both our hearts' content." (p. 88)
(Ramsay realizes that Diana Marfleet is another mother and he must reject anyone who will take care of him and hamper his freedom. From this point onwards he is never tempted by marriage. He has affairs and does recognize that this aspect of his life may be "warped" but he supports his various role models in remaining basically "uninvolved" with the opposite sex: Father Blazon, Paul, Liesl.)
2. "I have been cast by Fate and my own character for the vital though never glorious role of *Fifth Business*!" (p. 15)
(Ramsay does play this role with regards to Boy. He brings about Boy's recognition of himself and consequently the denouement of the novel and if Boy were the hero of the novel this statement would be absolutely true. However, someone has had to help Ramsay recognize his role as "*Fifth Business*"; this person is probably Padre Blazon. Davies seems to be saying that most of us in life need a "*Fifth Business*" trying to bring about self-recognition and perhaps then we, in turn, can become "*Fifth Businesses*" to other heroes, heroines, confidants and villains. Possibly too, this novel can become a "*Fifth Business*" for our own lives.)
3. "I clung to my notion, ill-defined though it was, that a serious study of any important body of human knowledge, or theory, or belief, if undertaken with a critical but not a cruel mind, would in the end yield some secret, some valuable permanent insight, into the nature of life and the true end of man." (p. 169)
(Ramsay approaches many areas of learning, including

FIFTH BUSINESS

- magic, history, zoology, religion, languages, and medieval and renaissance art and architecture. He finds illiteracy abhorrent. Throughout his pursuits he remains humble and grows to maturity and self-awareness.)
4. "You must find your answer in psychological truth, not in objective truth." (p. 177)
(Padre Blazon tells Ramsay not to work so hard at finding out whether Mary Dempster is a saint but to find out what she stands for in his personal mythology. Regardless of what happens to her, what is important is for him to understand the subtlety of her meaning for him and what his behaviour should be as a result. The psychological truth Ramsay eventually discovers can be found in the writings of Carl Jung.)
 5. "Why do people all over the world, and at all times, want marvels that defy all verifiable facts? And are the marvels brought into being by their desire, or is their desire an assurance rising from some deep knowledge, not to be directly experienced and questioned, that the marvellous is indeed an aspect of the real?" (p. 199)
(Saints and magic come together when Liesl asks Ramsay to create an appropriate "Autobiography" for Magnus because she has read his book on saints. He does write an excellent tale for Magnus. At the end, the puzzle of how saints are related to magic, good to evil, is not solved, but the solution is not important. What is important is the struggle.)
 6. "To be wondered at. This is not egotism. People want to marvel at something, and the whole spirit of our time is not to let them do it." (p. 208)
(Liesl tells us and Ramsay that people are attracted to the irrational. Dempster becomes a magician. Boy rejects this concept, even rejecting Ramsay for being "eccentric" but at the end he pays the price. Ramsay becomes a "marvelous" teacher; Liesl becomes "the talking head." Ramsay has a love for Madonnas and saints, particularly in art. In his youth he was attracted to magic; he is "religious" and yet the spirit of the times is anti-clerical.)
 7. "Why don't you shake hands with your devil, Ramsay, and change this foolish life of yours? Why don't you just for once, do something inexplicable, irrational, at the devil's bidding, and just for the hell of it? You would be a different man." (p. 226)
(Liesl pushes Ramsay towards greater integration. His Calvinism has made him too hard on himself. He has denied the personal Devil within himself and has not lived life to its fullest. Christianity and psychology, myth and magic, should all be combined in such a way that life will be filled with wonder and delight.)
 8. "Whom the gods hate they keep forever young." (p. 242)
(Ramsay learns this from his teacher, Padre Blazon, and consequently matures. He realizes how important this statement is, unlike Boy Staunton who only realizes this late in life and is so devastated by it that he commits suicide.)
 9. "...We are all three of the company of the twice born...We have all rejected our beginnings, and become something our parents could not have foreseen." (p. 262)
(Ramsay leaves a smothering mother and becomes "St." Dunstan in Europe; Paul too goes to Europe and becomes a magician/wolf. Percy rejects his parents and, ironically (since he hated his mother's pet name for him, "Pidgy Boy-Boy") adopts the name and role of "Boy." He never grows up.)
 10. "Heroism in God's cause is the mark of the saint, Ramezay, not conjuring tricks." (p. 249)
(Father Blazon emphasizes the fact that saints are blemished but that they do battle against sin. This definition might qualify Ramsay himself for sainthood. Not only is he a war-hero, but heroic in his treatment of Mary, and in the protection he shows towards Boy's wife and family [and Boy himself]. His humility, in accepting the position of Fifth Business, for example, also qualifies him.)
 11. "He was killed by the usual cabal; by himself, first of all; by the woman he knew; by the woman he did not know; by the man who granted his inmost wish; and by the inevitable fifth, the keeper of conscience and keeper of the stone." (p. 266)
(Boy never matured. He put the dark, destructive side of himself [the person who put a stone into a snowball] out of his mind. Eventually Ramsay forced him to see himself and the shock was too much for him. Leola was the person he knew but was unfaithful to and whom he killed metaphorically. Although one might argue that he did not "know" his second wife, Denyse, who seduced him, and ironically played a similar, malignant role towards him, as he had played towards Leola, turning him into the statesman he was incapable of being, a more obvious choice for "woman he did not know" would be Mary Dempster. Because he did not recognize the role she played in his life, he was devastated when he was finally reminded of his earlier actions, actions which should have resulted in feelings of guilt. The man who granted his inmost wish was Mary's son, Paul Dempster. Earlier Boy had wished he could get into a car "and drive away from the whole damned thing" (p. 242). Paul told him he would be out of his debt if he would drive him to his hotel. Paul did and then drove his Cadillac into the Toronto harbour. Finally, Ramsay was "inevitable fifth" who gave Boy a mirror that he had been keeping through the years — the stone.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY AND INTERPRETATION

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

1. Is Mary a saint? Is Dunstan a saint? How do they connect?
(Despite the three perceived miracles, or interventions into the natural order, Mary is not a true saint, except psychologically in the eyes of Ramsay. She is probably the "fool saint" and becomes a part of Ramsay's personal mythology; by understanding this he is led further along the path to his own possible sainthood. Through her, Ramsay becomes curious about sanctity and belief, about magic and religion. It can be argued that Dunstan has all the characteristics of a secular saint. He is a teacher and has the ability to lead others to self-awareness and understanding.)
2. A number of characters undergo name changes. Who? What do their new names suggest about them?
(Boy Staunton, Ramsay and Paul Dempster reject their

FIFTH BUSINESS

original names and go against their parental images of them. Boy Staunton rejects the name Percy Boyd. He thinks Percy is a joke name and Boy, perhaps borrowed from "Childe Rowland," is the name of a hero of "romance and gentle birth." Boy became this. His model was the Prince of Wales, whose growth also remained underdeveloped after the love and marriage phase of his life. Boy married a local beauty, acquired money, fame, and wealth, but remained "a boy."

Ramsay changed his name from Dunstable (his mother's maiden name) to Dunstan, thereby making his break with mother final. The new name is given to him by Diana, whom he is now wise enough to recognize as a mother substitute. Dunstan was a saint whose life pattern Ramsay adopts, even to the point of twisting the nose of the Devil (Liesl).

Paul, whose original name suggested the saint that originally intrigued Ramsay as an undergraduate, underwent two name changes: the magician, Faustus Legrand, a name which suggests the Devil who is magnificent and leads people into temptation; and Magnus Eisengrim, given to him by his patron/teacher, Liesl. The name comes from "the great northern beast fables and it means Wolf." Paul likes to be out-of-the ordinary and to provoke awe, as the name suggests. Like Ramsay he produces miracles but his have the spice of the Devil about them.

Liesl, too, has undergone a name change. Her theatre name is Vitzliputzli, a devil who attended the great magician, Faust.)

3. When Ramsay sees Boy's photos of his naked wife Leola, he tells him the myth of Gyges and King Candaules. Candaules had displayed his wife naked to his friend Gyges and two versions of the story continue: one that the wife took a fancy to Gyges and the other that Gyges killed Candaules. Why is this myth significant to the story?

(Ramsay has learned the significance of myth in a person's life. A wise man learns from it, discovers its subtleties. Boy never learns this. Eventually Leola does take a fancy to Ramsay but he wisely rejects her. Ramsay's startling revelation to Boy at the novel's end in his display of "the stone" causes Boy to commit suicide. Gyges kills Candaules. It must be remembered though that for Ramsay, myth only interprets; it does not transform his world.)

4. Why is the ending effective?
(From the point-of-view of the plot, or the story, the ending is very satisfying. It is similar to a detective story and we finally find out who the guilty party is. The conclusion is an elaborate re-construction of the opening scene of the novel and the additional information of the stone makes everything complete. The true significance of the title is given. Thematically the conclusion is also satisfying. Boy must die and Ramsay, because of his struggle towards self-awareness must achieve a happy maturity and some sense of wholeness. He joins Liesl and Paul, the artist-magician, in Switzerland. The Head provides us with a magical enigmatic answer as to who killed Boy. We have the pleasure of unlocking the meaning.)
5. What does the novel have to say about Canada?
(In Davies' early novels and plays Canadians were grey, mean, culturally illiterate, and it was the Europeans, with

their deep-rooted cultures and mythologies, who had dimension. Only in Europe could great spiritual adventures take place. Davies had received his university education in England and "his" great mentors were European. Today, he still dresses and talks like a European. In *Fifth Business*, Deptford is depicted as a narrow, dull, provincial town filled with phillistines. Those [typical?] Canadians who do not seek fulfillment abroad, people like Boy Staunton, never grow. Staunton is mildly criminal, only really interested in politics, big business and superficial womanizing. Others (the ideal Canadians?) are urbane; they escape Deptford and become more conscious of traditions, myth and legends, all European in origin. The USA is rarely mentioned in this book except in a derogatory way and it is probably true that Canadians do define themselves by denying a kinship with America. Europe seems to be more accessible and when the Deptford characters go there they seem at ease, even with language. Most Canadians do not refer to teachers as school-masters, nor principals as headmasters. Whether a Canadian reading this novel would cringe with recognition is debatable.)

6. Wherein lies the humour in this book?
(Many of the characters operate in the comic mode. Ramsay, in his early life, enjoys throwing comic barbs at people and continues doing so in his maturity. A line such as, "I never wanted to teach girls—don't in fact, think they are best served by the kind of education devised by men for men" is probably written for comic effect. Blazon, the seventy-six year old virgin, is essentially comic. The seduction scene between Liesl and Ramsay is melodramatic and funny. The names are funny. Davies plays tricks with them. Dunstan Ramsay has the initials of Robertson Davies. Father Blazon has the same initials as *Fifth Business*. Ramsay, being a gentleman, does not name the women he has affairs with, but invents implausibly cute new ones such as Agnes Day, Gloria Mundy and Libby Doe. His early girl friend is Spider Webb. Reverend George Maldon Leadbeater, the New York "prophet" who "just loves beauty" is a satiric portrait. Lorne Packer's view of Ramsay as it appeared in the *College Chronicle* is a comic parody of school journalism.)
7. What does Father Blazon teach Ramsay?
(Blazon's initials suggest a *Fifth Business* and that is the role he plays with Ramsay. Blazon does not concern himself with the miracles Ramsay is anxious about because he tends to regard all existence as miraculous. He suggests that Mary could be part of God's overall plan for him and asks to accept her as one who brought some illumination into his life. Ramsay himself must work to recognize how this works for him.)
8. What role does magic play in this novel?
(Magic is connected to the irrational. Ramsay is interested in it as a child and teaches Paul who eventually becomes the magician. Magic inspires awe and, like religion, is a necessary part of existence. Both Paul and Ramsay are "artists," Ramsay specializing in teaching and writing. Magic is thus connected to art. This book in itself is full of magical tricks, which the reader must work to figure out. As an entertainment, it is a kind of magic show!)

FIFTH BUSINESS

9. What is the significance of the title?
(Since the definition of *Fifth Business* precedes the title page of the book, it is obviously significant. The definition tells us that *Fifth Business* brings "about the Recognition" for the main characters. Blazon acts this role for Ramsay. Liesl explains the role in greater detail in her encounter with him, and finally Ramsay, through the stone, helps Boy recognize himself. Just as Blazon is his *Fifth Business*, Ramsay is Boy's *Fifth Business*. Possibly this whole novel may act as "our" *Fifth Business*.)

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Create a select bibliography of any books and articles written about *Fifth Business*. For each entry create a three or four line summary of the contents, possibly indicating your judgment on their value.
2. Davies has admitted to being much influenced by Carl Jung. Show that this book has its origins in many of Jung's theories.
3. *Fifth Business* has been criticized as being elitist. What elements would warrant such a view? Justify the criticism or defend elitism.
4. Ramsay has been a student to a number of teachers in his life and they have influenced and changed him. Write a paper in which you indicate the persons (living or dead) who have influenced and changed your life and show specifically how they have done so.
5. Write a chapter recreating the arrival of Ramsay to St. Gallen and his reunion with Liesl and Magnus after the death of Boy Staunton.
6. In essay form, write out the view of life as it is expressed by this novel and briefly indicate whether you agree with it or not.
7. Create a series of ten sketches (or photographs) that would illuminate key scenes in this novel. Indicate in writing the exact locations for placing these. If you desire, you may justify your choice of image.
8. Debate ONE of the following, using *Fifth Business* for source material:
 - (a) Eliticism is a positive concept
 - (b) Ramsay is a saint
9. Davies has said that human experience is "a fearful mingling of comedy, tragedy and melodrama." Show that this novel exemplifies this statement.
10. Davies regards myth and legend as "feeding life and (springing) from life as well as being a constant source of reference and refreshment in the living of life." Show that this philosophy (inspired by the philosopher, Jung) permeates Ramsay's thinking in this novel.
11. Write an outline for a film script for this novel. Your outline should include the sequence of scenes and commentary on how you would transfer particularly difficult moments from the novel to the screen. Generally, the purpose of the outline would be to SELL your ideas to a film-maker. Include the actual script for your opening (and possibly) closing scene.
12. Tell the story of Dunstan Ramsay, the secular saint, in ballad form.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Buitenhuis, Elspeth MacGregor. *Robertson Davies*. Toronto: Forum House, 1972.
- Cameron, Elspeth, Ed. *Robertson Davies: An Appreciation*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1991.
- Grant, Judith Skelton. *Robertson Davies*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.
- Roper, Gordon. "A Davies Log," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, XII, 1 (February 1977), 4-19.
- Thompson, Lars & Hayes, Becci. *Teacher's Guide: Fifth Business*. Companions to Literature Series. Toronto: S.B.F. Media, Ltd., 1991.

FIFTH BUSINESS

VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word(s) with one of the definitions listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- _____ 1. "Liesl...is the autocrat of the company, as you shall discover."
- _____ 2. "Any man who spoke up for Mary Dempster probably believed in free love."
- _____ 3. "Among my friends I dropped from the position of polymath to that of a credulous ass who thought that a dangerous lunatic could raise the dead."
- _____ 4. "...they went in for what the euphemism of the day called 'heavy petting' — mutual masturbation would be the bleak term for it."
- _____ 5. "She...had acquired a sufficient command of cliche to be able to talk smartly about anything Boy's friends were likely to know."
- _____ 6. "There was filial piety, as well as altruism in Boy's dream."
- _____ 7. "I knew of his philandering, of course, for Boy could not keep anything to himself and used to justify his conduct to me late at night..."
- _____ 8. "I was...too fastidious to want the pimply Heighington slut."
- _____ 9. "Liesl, now in early middle age and possessed by a simian distinction of appearance, was as near to me as before..."
- _____ 10. "All old tricks...offered without any of the facetiousness that usually makes magic shows so restless and tawdry."

- a. person of great learning
- b. trite expression
- c. religious person
- d. promiscuity
- e. understatement

- f. dictator
- g. accurate terminology
- h. leader
- i. cheap
- j. unselfishness

- k. monkey-like
- l. over-sensitive
- m. having love affairs
- n. physical attractiveness

FIFTH BUSINESS

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: True or False (20 points)

In the space provided write T if the statement is completely true or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. As boys, both Ramsay and Paul Dempster share an interest in the saints.
- _____ 2. "Nursie" is one of Boy Staunton's childhood nicknames.
- _____ 3. Cecil Athelstan was the black sheep of Deptford.
- _____ 4. For Ramsay, Willie's recall from death is Mary Dempster's first miracle.
- _____ 5. Sugar was one of old Doc Staunton's chief interests.
- _____ 6. Blazon introduces the term "fifth business" to Ramsay.
- _____ 7. Boy Staunton is chairman of the board of governors of Colborne College.
- _____ 8. When Leola dies, Boy is quite shaken by her loss.
- _____ 9. Faustina is Eisengrim's mistress.
- _____ 10. Both Boy and Ramsay leave the Presbyterian church.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

The following lines are thought or spoken by characters in the novel. From the list below, choose the person who is the subject of the quotation.

- _____ 1. "She knew she was in disgrace with the world, but did not feel disgraced; she knew she was jeered at, but felt no humiliation."
- _____ 2. "She possessed intelligence, conventional good looks, and unusual quality as in intriguer and politician, but was a woman whose life and interests were entirely external."
- _____ 3. "She grasped the handle behind her, but as she turned it I got a good hold on the bedhead with one hand, and seized her nose between the fingers of the other, and gave it such a twist that I thought I heard something crack."
- _____ 4. "Behold me, Ramezay, a virgin at the age of seventy-six."
- _____ 5. "...I have always thought it suspicious that [she] opened her windows one afternoon, when the nurse had closed them, and took a chill, and was dead in less than a week."

- a. Leola
- b. Mary
- c. Blazon
- d. Denyse
- e. Liesl
- f. Diana
- g. Mary's aunt
- h. the headmaster

FIFTH BUSINESS

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following sentences with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Chapter IV is entitled "Gyges and King Candaules." In the novel King Candaules would be related to:
(a) Ramsay (b) Leona (c) Boy (d) David
- _____ 2. A fool saint is (a) a saint tainted by madness (b) a saint sent to deliberately mislead (c) a saint for the mentally handicapped (d) the best of all saints.
- _____ 3. Mary Dempster's son has different names in the novel. One of the following names is false: (a) Paul (b) Magnus (c) Faustus Legrand (d) Eisenstein.
- _____ 4. Where does Ramsay first meet Liesl? (a) Europe (b) Canada (c) Mexico (d) the U.S.A.
- _____ 5. Which of the following refers to Ramsay as "laddie?" (a) Liesl (b) Mary Dempster (c) Diana Marfleet (d) Ramsay's mother.
- _____ 6. The Lifeline Mission is (a) the Bollandist Centre (b) Joel Sturgeon's headquarters (c) an English hospital (d) Deptford's Baptist church.
- _____ 7. Boy Staunton is influenced by all of the following characters except one: (a) his father (b) the Prince of Wales (c) Denyse (d) Leola.
- _____ 8. One of the following characters does not appear in this novel: (a) Mr. Mahaffey (b) Amasa Dempster (c) Roger Ramsay (d) Spider Webb.
- _____ 9. Which of the following is the most amusing character? (a) Padre Blazon (b) Magnus (c) Liesl (d) Leola (e) Diana.
- _____ 10. Ramsay maintains a child-like relationship with all of the following except one: (a) Mrs. Dempster (b) Padre Blazon (c) Boy Staunton (d) Liesl.

Part IV: Essay Question (40 points)

Answer one of the following.

1. Describe the relationship between Boy and Dunstan, explaining the significance of each in each other's life.

2. State the meaning and significance of the title.

FIFTH BUSINESS

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: True or False (20 points)

In the space provided write T if the statement is completely true or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Before Ramsay blacks out in the battlefields of France he sees a statue of the Virgin.
- _____ 2. As a teacher, Ramsay has affairs with a number of women.
- _____ 3. In the first chapter of the novel we find out that Boy has concealed a stone in a snowball he hurls at Ramsay.
- _____ 4. Faustina and Liesl have a lesbian relationship.
- _____ 5. "Getting off a good one" means being able to burp loudly, at will.
- _____ 6. At the end of the novel, Liesl invites Dunstan to join her and Paul in Switzerland, but this invitation is rejected.
- _____ 7. It is Diana Marfleet who suggests to Ramsay that he should change his name to Dunstan.
- _____ 8. Faustina is Eisengrim's mistress.
- _____ 9. Eisengrim speaks for the Brazen Head.
- _____ 10. The inability to learn is a serious disease in this world, and for Leola and Boy Staunton, it proves fatal.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

The following lines are spoken or thought by characters in the novel. From the list below choose the character representing the underlined word. Write the letter in the space provided.

- _____ 1. "His quality of feeling was weighty. I suppose this is what made him acceptable to the Baptists, who valued feeling very highly — much more than we Presbyterians, who were scared of it and tried to swap it for intellect."
- _____ 2. "He was the quintessence of the Jazz Age, a Scott Fitzgerald character."
- _____ 3. "He was four, and I was fourteen, so on the pretext of looking after him for an hour or two I would take him to the library..."
- _____ 4. "...father was the owner and editor of the local paper, *The Deptford Banner*."
- _____ 5. "Doc was not yet a Sugar-Beet King, but he was well on his way to it — a sort of Sticky Duke."

- a. Boy's father
- b. Dunstan Ramsay
- c. Boy Staunton
- d. Mary's husband
- e. Ramsay's father
- f. Paul Dempster
- g. the doctor who examines Willie

FIFTH BUSINESS

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following sentences with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Paul Dempster would consider all of the following to be his teachers except (a) Ramsay (b) Le Solitaire (c) Liesl (d) Boy.
- _____ 2. The beautiful old Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto is the location where (a) Liesl tells who killed Boy Staunton (b) Ramsay receives a hero's welcome after the war (c) Boy Staunton makes a political speech (d) Joel Sturgeon speaks to his public.
- _____ 3. Chapter IV is entitled "Gyges and King Candaules." In this novel Gyges most resembles: (a) Diana (b) Liesl (c) Ramsay (d) Leola.
- _____ 4. During his first trip to Europe Ramsay spends time in (a) the Tyrol (b) Belgium (c) England (d) Switzerland.
- _____ 5. The Bollandists are (a) a troupe of magicians (b) Jesuits (c) church people headed by Joel Sturgeon (d) polymaths.
- _____ 6. Of the following Deptford churches, which either does not exist or is never mentioned: (a) Presbyterian (b) Roman Catholic (c) Lutheran (d) Baptist.
- _____ 7. One of the following languages is not spoken by Paul Dempster: (a) French (b) Spanish (c) Italian (d) German.
- _____ 8. Dunstan's European ancestors were (a) English (b) Scottish (c) German (d) French.
- _____ 9. One of the following persons does not attend the funeral of Leola Staunton: (a) Milo Pape (b) Dunstan (c) David (d) Boy.
- _____ 10. Connected to the cremation of Mary Dempster was (a) only a small group of visitors (b) Chanel Number Five (c) an oak coffin (d) a Baptist ceremony.

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Is Mary Dempster a saint? In an essay form state the pros and cons and come to conclusions similar to Dunstan Ramsay's.

2. Why does Boy Staunton commit suicide?

FIFTH BUSINESS

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Test

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. f | 5. b | 8. i |
| 2. d | 6. j | 9. k |
| 3. a | 7. m | 10. i |
| 4. e | | |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: True or False (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. T | 5. T | 8. F |
| 2. F | 6. F | 9. T |
| 3. T | 7. T | 10. F |
| 4. F | | |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| 1. b | 3. e | 5. a |
| 2. d | 4. c | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 5. d | 8. c |
| 2. a | 6. b | 9. a |
| 3. d | 7. d | 10. c |
| 4. c | | |

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: True or False (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. T | 5. F | 8. T |
| 2. T | 6. F | 9. F |
| 3. F | 7. T | 10. T |
| 4. T | | |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| 1. d | 3. f | 5. a |
| 2. c | 4. e | |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. d | 5. b | 8. b |
| 2. a | 6. c | 9. d |
| 3. c | 7. c | 10. b |
| 4. b | | |

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.



Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1
Toll free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-705-876-9703