

APPENDIX

SYNOPSIS OF JOHN UPDIKE'S THE CENTAUR

The story is about George Caldwell, a middle aged, who is a science teacher at Olinger High School. He lives in a farm at Firetown with his wife, his son, and his father-in-law. George has no confidence as a teacher and family man. He feels that his small salary as a teacher is the cause of poverty in his family. He then thinks himself as a failure, and feels that his life is worthless. Actually, George is worthy. He is a kind man who always wants to help other people when it is needed. He just does not realize it.

One day, when he attempts to interest his unruly class his ankle receives an arrow thrown by one of his students. He wonders if the arrow is poisoned, and fears if it has spread poison through his body. It makes him obsessed with the thought of death.

Pretending to hate his students, George in fact gives them his life. When a diver he has coached tries but fails in competition, he alone applauds. Similarly, though he insists he is useless as father, he both protects Peter's body and soul.

In the afternoon after teaching, George goes to see a doctor in Olinger town, to x-ray for suspecting cancer that is caused by the poisoned arrow, But he cannot get the result. On the way home, his car breaks, and he and his son have to stay in a hotel. On the way to the hotel, they meet a drunk man who suddenly asks George whether he is ready to die or not.

Since George is not ready with the question, he cannot answer it.

When George and Peter arrive home, Cassie tells George that the doctor has called, and the x-ray shows him to be freed of the feared of cancer. George realize that actually his problem is not a cancer, but his inability in accepting his roles as a teacher and family man.

Finally, George realizes that he has to make a decision in order to solve his problem. He chooses that he has to accept his roles in life with responsibility.

JOHN UPDIKE

(1932-)

John Updike was born on March 18, 1932 at Shillington, Pennsylvania. His father, a school teacher, often inspired many of the father-teachers in his fiction. The family lived with Updike's maternal grandparents during the Depression, moving to a farm during his adolescence.

Most of Updike's works provide an impressive account of American life in the second half of the twentieth century (Magill, 1983:2686). Usually it is laid in a Pennsylvania town. Characters in his novel find their jobs to be terribly tiring, and work is a burden for them.

The Centaur is Updike's third novel, and his most ambitious exercise in personal nostalgia (Unger, 1979:219). It includes the removal of his family from a small city to a farm. Peter, the son, is Updike himself as an adolescent with artistic aspiration, and Olinger is in a sense of Shillington. In this novel, George Caldwell, the main character, is modeled on Updike's father, the high school teacher. However, he makes this novel his final attempt to convert autobiography to art ((Magill, 1983: 2700).

Updike's career resembles that of F. Scott Fitzgerald in several ways that his works also provide a chronicle of an era that is in American life, just as Fitzgerald is now appreciated as the great interpreter of the Jazz Age (1983: 2686).