Nichols, Mike (1931-) and Elaine May (1932-) Encyclopedia Article

Nichols, Mike (1931-) and Elaine May (1932-)

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Nichols, Mike (1931-) and Elaine May (1932-) Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Nichols, Mike (1931—) and Elaine May (1932—).....3

Nichols, Mike (1931—) and Elaine May (1932—)

Along with Lenny Bruce and other "satirists" who emerged during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the team of Mike Nichols and Elaine May made a major impact on the development of modern American comedy. Nichols and May began working together in 1955 as members of The Compass Players, a Chicago-based improvisational theater troupe. From the beginning, the uncommon rapport these young, quick-witted performers enjoyed together enabled them to improvise innovative parodies of popular culture, mock interviews, and satiric dialogues with ease. In late 1957, they began honing much of their material into a solo nightclub act. Over the next several years, the pair appeared on dozens of television programs and specials, performed weekly segments for NBC Radio's *Monitor,* enjoyed a successful run on Broadway, produced several popular comedy albums, and even improvised material for commercial advertisements. For many Americans who saw or heard them perform, Nichols and May brought a startlingly new, fresh, and "sophisticated" approach to comedy. Eschewing traditional male/female patter, they created timely and occasionally daring satires of psychoanalysis, show business, contemporary sexual mores, the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association), and many other subjects dealing with suburban, middle-class life. Nichols and May later pursued successful individual careers in the theater and in motion pictures.

Further Reading:

Coleman, Janet. *The Compass: The Improvisational Theatre That Revolutionized American Comedy.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990.